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MOUNT AND MAN

A KEY TO BETTER HORSEMANSHIP

By

LIEUT.-COL. M. F. McTAGGART, D.S.O.

LATE 5TH R. I. LANCERS

With a Foreword by

Field-Marshal VISCOUNT ALLENBY, G.C.B.

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1926

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TO

MY FATHER-IN-LAW

MR. J. P. LAW, J.P.

THE OLDEST MEMBER OF THE BRAMHAM MOOR HUNT

Here's luck ! Oh, good grey sportsman,
May time be long defied
By careful seat and cunning hand
And health and heart to ride.
And when that direful day be come,
That surely shall befall,
We'll know you still unbeaten
Save by Time, that beats us all.

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FOREWORD

LIEUT.-COLONEL McTAGGART tells us that, in this book, his endeavour has been to present the chief difficulties of riding in as simple a manner as possible, and I think that all who turn the pages will agree that he has admirably succeeded.

No one could have better qualifications for such a task than has Lieut.-Colonel McTaggart, well known as an accomplished horseman and horsemaster, with wide and varied experience, expert in the theory and the practice of equitation; he possesses, moreover, the gifts of patience and kindness, in virtue of which he can be not merely the master but the friend of his horse.

The note of sympathy between mount and man is recognisable in all he writes.

The art of riding has notably advanced during the last two or three decades; and the rough methods of the old riding schools, under which man and horse suffered as lately as the eighties of the nineteenth century—the decade in which I joined the cavalry—are now but unhappy, far-off memories.

The author lays down as the two main points in the art of horsemanship, Balance and Sympathy.

The subject is thoroughly explored and discussed in a style which is lucid and clear; and the conclusions reached are based on reasons cleverly and convincingly stated.

Connected with Balance are the problems of the forward seat, stirrups, and grip, on which—and many other points—we are given enlightenment and guidance.

An interesting chapter is that headed "Can Ladies Ride

Astride?" Also commendable is the chapter on "Mastery"; in this chapter occurs the shrewd comment, "No one has ever seen a refusal at the last fence."

All riders, skilled or unskilled, old or young, should give the volume a hearty welcome; and in its perusal they will find pleasure and profit.

The Residency,
Cairo.
April 8, 1925.

INTRODUCTION

FOR many years it has seemed to me that the standard of riding in this country is too low.

If one stands, as I have often done, watching the field out hunting jumping a simple fence, it is surprising how few know how to negotiate it properly, and how a plain post and rails provided they are unbreakable, will stop nearly the whole field.

I feel sure that if only we would give more attention to the science and art of horsemanship, we would be able to go straighter to hounds, with more enjoyment and greater safety.

I feel, also, that in steeplechasing there is yet plenty of room for improvement amongst our jockeys, and that much more can be done in the sympathetic handling of the horse in stable and saddle. Sometimes we see horses being ridden in severe bits, fretting all day long against the unnecessary discomfort. Sometimes we notice horses' sides pitted with the marks of the spur, and sometimes we see them being knocked about either in the hunting field or training ground with crop or cane.

All these things are unnecessary and stupid.

The best results are obtained by sympathetic treatment, where both horse and rider understand one another. It has been said that a man will do anything he is asked if he is asked in the right way. I believe that to be true, and as with men, so with horses. I also believe that a horse will do anything he is asked if he only understands what the question is.

It is also sometimes said that the horse is a stupid animal, but the more we study him the more we realise that, far from being stupid, he has some capabilities even greater than man himself.

In some directions he does appear abnormally foolish, as in shying, but there are other lines in which his intellect is wonderfully developed, as the following story will show :

In Flanders, during December, 1914, I had occasion to stable my horses in a then quiet little town, for about ten days. After that my horses were transported all over northern France and Belgium, sometimes by train, sometimes by night, backwards and forwards over the whole theatre of operations. In November, 1917, or nearly three years afterwards, I was hacking along through a town when suddenly my horse essayed to turn down a side street for no apparent reason. I then realised that she was making for her old stable, the one she had occupied three years before! I should add that the town then bore but little resemblance to its appearance of 1914, and I myself had certainly not recognised where I was.

Most of us could give similar experiences, I feel sure, because the more we have to do with horses the more we wonder at their wonderful gifts of memory and observation.

Consequently, in training and riding horses, we should always bear in mind the attributes they do possess, and work on those.

It has been said, " Blessed is he that knoweth his own limitations," and I would add to that, " Blessed is the trainer that knoweth the horse's limitations," for once we realise what a horse can understand, we are well on the way to sympathetic treatment and effective training.

With regard to horsemanship, my endeavour has been to establish those principles which, in my opinion, make the true horseman. Balance is its very essence, and to be " one " with the horse in every movement is the ideal of us all.

Although many did not agree with me originally in my advocacy of the forward or balanced seat, this has now, I think, been generally adopted as the right one, and is taught in all up-to-date schools.

But to those who still are in doubt, and hesitate to change the methods on which they have been taught, I can only urge a trial.

We who have become converted would never go back to the

old way, and I feel sure were we to take our horses to the poll, they would unanimously vote "forward."

In the steeplechasing world we find criticism almost entirely devoted to the race-riding aspect of horsemanship. This is, of course, only natural. We want our jockeys to win races, and the one that wins most races is the best jockey. In this simple line of reasoning there is little to dispute, but, if it is therefore assumed that he is necessarily a specially good horseman, then the logic breaks down.

There are two very distinct points we should keep clear in our minds. Race riding is one. Here we have the question of judgment predominating. How to get a good start, how to save the horse through the race, to get and maintain a good position, to watch the other competitors, to know when to come along, and how to ride a finish. All these things can be done, and, I may say, are done, by jockeys who are quite moderate as riders. But as long as they don't fall off, and keep winning races, the owners, trainers, and the public are satisfied, and they are described as "perfect horsemen."

This wouldn't matter in the least if it only referred to race riding, and the eulogy might quite easily be true, but unfortunately for their supporters, photographs are taken of them when jumping. They may be sitting all wrong, they may be perpetrating many grave errors in equitation, but because they are pictures of winning jockeys they are taken as examples of "how to sit a horse over a steeplechase fence."

It is this we have to fight against. Because some well-known jockey happens to ride that way, or because on some occasion, probably inadvertently, he has got into some awkward position, it is no proof that that is how it should be done.

And yet this is what is happening. We see it in books on riding, and we see it in the picture papers, and it is very misleading to all those who are studying the arts of horsemanship.

In public estimation, any rider who rides in "the National" must be a good horseman, and everyone who wins it must be superb.

We know this isn't the case, but when a jockey is away out "in the country" who can tell how he is riding? As long as he keeps going, and comes in well up, what further proof is necessary or possible?

Personally I think a great deal more is necessary.

I think that if any jockey were to study the art of equitation a little more, he would win a greater number of races, his falls would be fewer, and his reputation enhanced.

When schooling, a good tip to find out how your jockey has been riding is to watch his breathing as he pulls up. If he is much out of breath, you know he must have been sitting all wrong over his fences. The good horseman, under all normal conditions, will ride a school without effort to himself, and should pull up undistressed. It is just as important to watch the breathing of your jockey as of your horse.

It is important, therefore, to avoid thinking that because So-and-so has won so many races, his riding must be first-class.

The more correct way of reasoning should be this. So-and-so, in spite of having had no special training in the arts of equitation, has succeeded in winning many races, and is, therefore, a first-class race rider. If he had had really good schooling he would have done better still.

Let us think for a moment how these steeplechase lads are trained. They usually begin as lads, and ride walking exercise. After that they do some gallops, and are eventually tried in public. If they get too heavy for flat racing they take to steeplechasing. They then do some more gallops over hurdles, and a few "schools" over fences. They learn to stick on somehow, and then, when they have won their first steeplechase their education is complete.

Of course, I am only speaking generally; I do not include everyone, for, naturally, some of our leading jockeys are very fine horsemen. But such is the standard of steeplechase horsemanship, and many people to-day agree that it might be a little better than it is.

It is hoped that the few hints I have been able to give in the following pages may help in a small degree to improve the standards of riding, not only in the hunting field, but also between the flags.

Before concluding, I feel I must say a few words about falls.

"A fall's a hawful thing," we well know was the opinion of Jorrocks, but when he said that, he was only referring to himself. I want my readers to go with me a little further.

We should regard a fall as an error of training, riding, or judgment. I do not, naturally, refer to the quite unexpected fall that sometimes does occur, which no one can prevent, but the "common or garden" toss we see so many of in the hunting field over normal fences.

The usual reasons for tosses are apparent enough:

Putting a horse badly at a fence;

Overfacing a horse;

Going too fast, or too slow;

Pulling a horse right into the fence, and so on.

All of these are errors of horsemanship or of judgment.

When a horse falls by galloping into a blind ditch, this may be an error of training or of riding or judgment. But whatever it is, it is nothing to be proud of.

Have we not sometimes heard our young thrusters adding up their falls after a day's hunting, and giving the cross for valour to the one who had most!

This is very sporting and all that, but it is wrong-headed. We want to shove along as straight as possible always, but we should be *ashamed* of our falls.

The good horseman has very, very few, and goes well; the indifferent performer has very many, and never gets anywhere.

There is a curious thing about falling—we seldom or never see a bad fall over a big fence. The worst accidents are always on the flat or at gaps. The reason for this is that at a big fence both horse and rider are on the look-out. It is when the unexpected happens, when both are totally unprepared, that the really bad fall occurs.

The lesson, therefore, is that every obstacle, no matter how small or insignificant, should be ridden at just as carefully as a big fence.

Pull your horse together, and put him at it, as if it were a serious

obstacle. If we do not do this, we are inviting trouble. There is quite enough in this hard world as it is without running into unnecessary difficulties, which may lead us into nursing homes, and worse still, the loss of the season's hunting.

Good horsemanship is so much a question of balance that my leading chapters will be largely devoted to this subject. Length of stirrup leather, length of rein are intimately connected with it, in so much that unless these are correct, we shall never ride well.

My first chapter, therefore, deals with the balance of the body in the saddle.

" Head free and loins free " is the motto for the leap, and " Blame yourself before you blame your horse " is the motto for the horseman.

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PLAIN POSTS AND RAILS, PROVIDED THEY ARE UNBREAKABLE, WILL STOP NEARLY THE WHOLE FIELD.

MOUNT AND MAN

I

BALANCE

I don't know any tune from any other;
I couldn't sing a song if I were paid;
I couldn't, for the ransom of a brother,
Hum a single thing that anybody played.
But I know one melody,
That can stir the heart of me.
It is the mad and merry challenge of the horn,
With the chime of hounds that follow,
And the cheer and rate and holloa,
That can shake the very dewdrops from the thorn.

THERE are so many ways of sitting on a saddle, and of riding generally, that it is difficult, even for experts, to explain why one man's seat is preferable to that of another. In every art plenty of latitude must be given to individuality, and there is no art in which this is more noticeable than in that of horsemanship. Some riders achieve good results by being what are called strong riders. They remain with the horse largely by muscular effort. Others seem to succeed equally well who have no such pretensions. Some get fair results by the "crash and bang" style, and others by more delicate treatment; but few are satisfied with the results, for most of us feel there is much room for improvement.

It is generally admitted that balance is an essential and a fundamental of riding, and it is the object of this chapter to look into this matter and to find out if we cannot discover some clue to the solution of the problem of "seat."

Even though there are many ways of sitting on a saddle, we must allow there are few that can be called balanced. If the seat be not a balanced one, then connection with the saddle can only be

maintained by force, either by the legs, or by the hands, or by both. If the seat be approaching a balance, the effort can be reduced, and

FIG. 1.

The usual seat at the walk. This is partly influenced by the build of the saddle, and, as long as nothing more than the walk is attempted, has the merit of ease and simplicity. It must be noticed, however, that the body is behind the line of balance, and it is, consequently, scientifically incorrect.

FIG. 2.

This is a very common seat, but as the foot is slightly forward, it throws the line of balance of the whole body further back than in Fig. 1.

FIG. 3.

Another common seat. It is obvious that the faults in Fig. 2 are still more apparent.

The dotted line represents the line of equipoise.

if the balance be a true one, we only require a normal and natural pressure. So, if we wish to ride comfortably, we must ride balanced.

There can be only three distinct fulcra from which balance can be maintained in the saddle, namely, the seat bones, the knees, and

the feet. Each method has moments for use, and restriction at all times to only one of these cannot be correct. It is the art of horse-

FIG. 4.

The usual seat at the trot. In this instance the line of balance is still backward, but not to the same extent as at the walk.

FIG. 5.

This is the *correct* position at the trot. Here we see that the balance of the body is *not* behind, but is very slightly forward, which is the only way of overcoming the dynamic force of the propulsion. It should be noted that the stirrup is vertically below the side bars.

The dotted line represents the line of equipoise.

manship to know when and how to use each at the right time and in the right way.

When sitting in a saddle naturally, at both the standstill and the walk, it is necessary to have the seat bones as the fulcrum for the

balance; not, however, because of any scientific rule of either statics or dynamics, but because saddles are built that way, and we cannot help ourselves. Perhaps, some day, saddles will be built on lines indicated in a later chapter, and we shall be able to bring the balance of the body, even when sitting without movement, into the realm of pure science. As matters now are, the correct seat should, I think, be as depicted in Fig 1, and not as in Fig. 2. Fig. 3 depicts a very common attitude which has little to recommend it. The respective merits of these three seats can be judged in a moment directly we add motion to the pictures. Let us assume that the horse makes a sudden leap into the air, and it will then be seen at once that No. 3 would have a very poor chance, No. 2 might get off with a bit of a scramble, while No. 1 would probably meet the unexpected difficulty with reasonable assurance. It should be noted that in Fig. 1 the lower part of the leg is drawn further back than is usually advocated, in order that the stirrup leather may hang perpendicularly.

A good seat at the walk is seldom better exemplified than by many of the mounted police in London, and all students of equitation would do well to look at them carefully. They have been taught to sit in their saddles in the right place and in the right way, and a very refreshing sight it is to the enthusiast, who so often sees the perpetuation of fault not only in the beginner, but in the *habitués* of the hunting field. This walking seat is, however, only suitable for that pace. When there is no spring, the seat bones must rest upon the saddle, and the balance is derived from those points; but when the pace increases to anything beyond the cadence of a measured tread, the balance must instantly be transferred elsewhere.

Fig. 1 is, therefore, the first or preliminary balance, where the whole weight of the body rests upon the saddle, and the legs, beyond a slight pressure, need not be operating appreciably. In this phase, ease and freedom are the primary consideration, and the only rule, beyond that of having the feet well back, is to see that the seat bones are as far forward in the saddle as possible, in order to take

PLATE II.

VISIONS OF ROUNDED FORMS.

the weight from the loins, and to reduce the probability of being thrown back whenever the horse takes it into his head to display sudden activity.

Naturally, when we are riding at ease, much latitude can be allowed; but we must remember that the balance from the seat bones cannot be maintained beyond the walk. There used to be what was described as the "old gentleman's seat," in which the body was back and the feet forward at the canter, and I have visions of rounded forms on stout cobs forging their way over ridge and furrow with an unjustifiable serenity. Catastrophe always followed the unexpected; but as long as things went well, they completed their day's hunting without mishap. I am thankful to say we are past those times, because, however pleasurable to the rider, it must have been very much the reverse to the horse. It was, in fact, a travesty of riding; it was not horsemanship.

This brings us to the next stage in our survey of the balance in the saddle: when motion is no longer our servant but our master. There may be occasions in riding when the balance of the body is maintained by the knee grip. I am not now referring to the balance being assisted by the knees—which is a normal condition—but to those occasions when the fulcrum of the balance is actually at the knee. These occasions are, fortunately, fleeting, for they demand as strong a grip as we are capable of, and the times when such a solution is necessary are comparatively rare. It happens, perhaps, when approaching a fence on a sticky horse, which is likely to refuse, or on a quick one which is "nappy," or when finishing a race, or, now and then, on the polo ground. Even at these moments the balance of the body is not necessarily from the knee; but it is on occasions such as these when this balance could be attained and might be efficacious. The point is, in truth, of little importance, and it would not be worth dwelling on were it not a somewhat prevalent view that we obtain our balance from our knees. Before passing on, therefore, it may be as well to visualise what a balance from the knees really means.

If the body is supported by a grip of the knees alone, it follows

that there can be no weight on the stirrup irons, and they will be, with difficulty, kept on the feet. It is this fact which produces the loose stirrup we so often see when jumping.

I speak of no contentious matter when I say that, under all circumstances, it is right to have the leathers taut. That means that a considerable proportion of the rider's weight must, in any case, rest on the irons. If that is so, then I think it is obvious that the rider should not attempt to balance himself from his knees. A tip in training pupils to jump is to get them to keep a small disc (like the inside top of a tobacco tin) on their stirrup iron, by pressure of the foot throughout the leap. This is far better than getting them to hold something with their knees, as is often advocated.

We do have, in riding, very often a combination of a partial pressure upon the stirrup iron and of a partial grip with the knee. This is, in fact, a method of riding which is only too frequently adopted. It works very well under normal conditions, but when unexpected or difficult occasions arise, its faults become apparent. The difficulty of balance in such circumstances is not so great, provided the lower portion of the leg is vertical; but should the foot be thrown even moderately forward, the difficulties become obvious. The fulcrum, instead of being a point, becomes, in the first case a vertical, and in the second case an oblique base, upon which to balance, and its difficulties can be observed if we study Fig. 3. The line of equipoise, in this case, passes half-way between the knee and the foot, and it can be readily seen how much "behind the work" such a seat is.

It is obviously unbalanced by itself, and can only remain in that position by considerable effort or by support on the back of the saddle D. If we add P (propulsion), we can only counteract that force by pressure on that point, or, of course, from support by the reins. In other words, the horse has to bear extra weight upon his loins or on his mouth.

It may be asked, In what way does a rider balance himself when riding without stirrups? Does he not place himself in a position similar to this, and does he not remain on the horse's back by balance?

PLATE III.

CONTORTIONS THAT LOOK SO RIDICULOUS.

The answer to this is, that such balance as is obtained is one of expediency and not of permanence. In riding bareback, or without stirrups, grip becomes a necessary precaution, and grip is alone necessary when the body of the rider is becoming unbalanced. Consequently, it can be asserted that riding in such circumstances is nothing more nor less than an unbalanced equestrianism, the difficulties of which can be partially overcome by intelligent anticipation. For example, when going round a corner, the rider leans inwards, and so overcomes centrifugal force. His other difficulties may sometimes be surmounted by the use of rein and hand, a device which merely shows that the rider is out of balance, and nature comes to his aid by the laws of self-protection. The question of "bumping" in the saddle need not be discussed, as it is merely a process of "cup and ball." The horse throws the rider up and catches him again. It is, therefore, the third phase of balance which is the most important of all.

The balance should be, normally, at all paces beyond the walk, from the feet. This is a matter of such importance in equitation that it can hardly be over-emphasised. When this point has been grasped, many of the difficulties previously experienced fade away. This rule, largely unaccepted and unapplied as it is to-day, is, after all, quite clear when we come to think it over. Let us, at any rate for the moment, accept this fact, and we come at once to another important point. If we were on our feet, and were about to make a series of jumps (which is what we are doing on horseback at every stride at the trot, canter and gallop), we should find it very awkward if we were to jump off up-hill ground every time. We should always prefer to jump off level ground. But in the saddle, if the foot is pushed ever so little forward, the stirrup-leather is off the perpendicular, and that is similar to jumping off rising ground. It is this fact which produces the grotesque effect some beginners display when rising at the trot (Plate III.). Their feet are stuck out inordinately, and in the effort of the body to rise against the "hill" they have themselves created, they produce those contortions which look so ridiculous. If only that beginner were told his fault, he would be

cured instantly. The ridicule, in fact, is directed at the wrong person. It is the instructor who is to blame, not the pupil. This question of the upright stirrup-leather is a constant factor in equitation. No matter whether we are approaching a fence in process

Fig. 6.

A represents the most forward position possible for the seat bones, and is several inches behind line B. Consequently the feet have a tendency to be too far forward for a true balance.

of its negotiation, or landing, we should attempt to maintain its perpendicularity. Needless to say that, as the balance is from the foot, the weight of the body must be largely borne upon the irons at all times. A slack leather is an unerring sign of an ill-balanced

PLATE IV.

THIS IS A VERY COMMON SEAT.

Here, the weight of the rider's body is taken on the horse's loins. It may be comfortable for the rider, but it is terribly tiring for the horse.

body. This is the only possible way by which we can retain our balance, although there are many methods of riding more or less efficacious.

Through having our bodies in perfect equipoise, based upon the stirrup iron in this way, we not only find great comfort and control of ourselves, but it is also an immense help to the horse, which is then carrying the rider's weight away from his loins and close to his own centre of gravity. In every way, therefore, is the principle apparently a sound one, and once it is mastered, the improvement visible in crossing a country, either in the hunting field or in the 'chase, is most noticeable. It applies equally to the side saddle, for, which ever our sex, we are all bound by the same rules, and, whether we hunt or race, we cannot get away from the old, old fact that in any form of athletics, if we wish to be balanced, we must be balanced from our feet.

The reason why it is at present impossible to be scientifically balanced at the standstill (except from the seat bones) is because of the position of the side bars in relation to the seat.

If a rider is to be truly balanced, *i.e.*, from his feet, when sitting in the saddle, his seat bones should be almost in line with his heels. If we look at Fig. 6, we notice that the line A (or the position of the seat) is considerably behind the line B. So that a rider sitting in the saddle would find his seat bones several inches behind the line of his heels.

In order to counteract this, and to obtain a true line of equipoise vertically passing upward from the stirrup iron, it would be necessary for him to lean his body forward to an appreciable extent, which would, of course, be grotesque, or to sit in a more forward position in the saddle than that designed by the saddler.

This matter is, however, gone into more fully in a later chapter, but as we are at present dealing with things as they are, and not as they might be, it must be accepted that there are two distinct balances in the saddle.

When walking or standing still we should be balanced from our seat bones, and at all other paces from our feet.

II

THE LENGTH OF THE STIRRUP LEATHER

I leap to the saddle a man indeed,
For all I can do and dare
In the power and speed that is mine at need,
While I sit on the back of my mare.

THE length of our leathers is so intimately connected with balance in the saddle that it comes as a natural sequel to the last chapter. We can never expect to maintain a true balance unless we have paid special attention to this apparently unimportant matter. If we look round us in the hunting field, we shall search in vain for uniformity. We shall see "the steeplechasing gent" with his stirrups very short, and we shall also see quite a large number who are riding very long. If we seek advice, we shall get a variety of replies which will leave us no wiser than before.

Some people will say that a fat horse requires a longer (or shorter) leather than a thin one, others that it depends upon the shape of the rider's legs. Some say that a man with round thighs must ride shorter (or longer) than a man with flat thighs. No one will be able to tell you what round thighs are, what they mean, or what they imply. But that will not matter in the least; you will, undoubtedly, be assured that it is intimately connected with the length of the stirrup leather. The more questions you ask the more bewildered you will become, until you give up wondering, and carry on in the way that seems to suit best.

Most books will tell you that one way to find out if your stirrups are the right length before mounting is to measure them with the length of the arm to the tip of the fingers.

This is certainly a good rough rule, because it does prevent the rider finding them inordinately long or short after he has mounted; but it is only a guiding rule; it is not intended to be either scientific or exhaustive.

Another rule, which applies after mounting has taken place, is to rise in the stirrups, and see that the fork just clears the pommel.

But this rule has less to recommend it because, after mounting, if the first rule is not found satisfactory, the second one will be of no assistance.

There is, in fact, nothing else that will help us except experiment. We cannot say if we are riding the right length until we have tested that particular horse in the particular pace we intend to adopt. There may be variations even in the day of the week. For instance, on Monday morning, after Sunday's rest, when the horse is very fresh, he may easily require one hole shorter than on a Saturday, say, when he is tired.

The question is, after all, a very simple one, and can be explained without very much difficulty. It is one of stride, and that alone decides the matter. If you are riding a horse with straight shoulders and a tied-in action, you can ride longer than if you are on a horse with good shoulders and free movement. If you are only going to jump very small obstacles at a steady canter, you can ride longer than if you intend to jump big fences at a fast gallop. If you are going to ride a steeplechase, you must ride shorter than if you were out hunting. The reason being nothing more nor less than the stride, or spring, the horse is going to make.

We must remember that every pace beyond the walk is, in reality, a succession of jumps. The simple jog (when the horse is fidgety) represents a jump at every stride of about 6 inches ; the steady trot, of about 2 feet to 3 feet ; the canter, of 4 feet or so ; and the extended gallop, 7 feet 6 inches. These are, roughly speaking, the distances the horse is actually in suspension. It does not represent the length of the stride, which is another matter altogether. From that we get to the varied distances of the leap, which, seldom under 10 feet, can extend to 25 feet and even more. Thirty feet is common in the annals of hunting when recording exceptional jumps. Twenty feet is so common that it is done by almost every good horse out of a canter (when given freedom by his rider). Unfortunately, we have no records of steeplechasing, but it would be extremely interesting if

we had measurements of what horses have done at, we will say, the first fence at Liverpool.

It stands to reason, therefore, that if we are riding a horse that is going to cover 25 feet in his stride, we must ride shorter than if we never expect to cover more than 10 feet. If, however, we are hacking to the meet, we can reasonably expect that we shall do nothing more than trot (or, say, a 4-foot to 6-foot spring); we should then ride at a suitable length for that sized stride and only pull up our stirrups when we arrive at the meet. In the same way, when hacking home, especially if both horse and rider are tired, we should let the stirrups out, because the spring will not be over 2 feet or so.

In dealing with this subject, we must remember two things: the shorter the stirrup, the more it throws back the weight on to the horse's loins at the walk and stand, and the more cramped the rider becomes. We should always remember to ride as short as we must, but not shorter than we need. A rider, for example, with a steeplechase seat throughout the whole of a day's hunting would bring back both himself and his horse tired out. This, I think, sufficiently deals with the laws of length, and we will now turn to the reasons for their enforcement.

If a rider is riding too long—when jumping a fence particularly—it is very difficult for him to be properly balanced in the saddle, and he will find himself "left behind." This produces a variety of undesirable results, all or any of which may occur. The horse gets a jab in the mouth, he has to jump with the rider's weight on his loins, he jumps without freedom, and he may even fall on that one account alone. In fact, an unbalanced jump is a most uncomfortable thing for both horse and rider, and, what is more, it is dangerous. Consequently, if we want to cross a country well and safely, we cannot think too much of the ever-present problem of balance. To show how important it is to the horse, let me relate the following experience, which very clearly proves the point in question.

One day I was jumping a post and rails on a very highly trained and accomplished performer, and several times in succession the top rail was knocked down. An onlooker expressed surprise that the

horse had gone off his jumping to such an extent, and advocated getting out the whip and "tickling him up" a bit. But it struck me that, as the ground was sloping upwards on the take-off side, I might do well to shorten my stirrups a little, so I pulled them up, only one hole, and put the horse at the rails again. This time I realised that I was much better balanced, and the result was most apparent. The rails were cleared by over 6 inches each time afterwards without difficulty. The horse had recovered its form! The fault, truly, was mine all the time; the horse had never been to blame. This shows, if anything can, how important these apparently small things are, and what a difference they make to both our safety and comfort during a day's hunting.

Having now given both rule and reason, let us finally try to explain how the rule comes to be. Why should we have to ride shorter because the horse's stride or leap is bigger? The answer is to be found on the floor of the gymnasium. If we wish to jump on foot a distance of 2 feet or so, we find we can do that with a very slight effort, and we need only bend our knees a little (*vide* Fig. 7). But supposing we are called upon to jump as far as we are able, we find we have to sink our bodies until our knee-joints form about a right angle (*vide* Fig. 9). These two exercises have their analogy in the saddle, in the steady trot and the steeplechase.

Supposing, however, we sank so that our knee-joints formed an angle less than 90°, we should find we had overdone it, and we should not be able to jump so far. Here we have the example of the over-short rider, who looks so grotesque on the racecourse. There are limits to everything, and I think it may be said that it can never be necessary to ride shorter than the right angle.

There is yet one further point which must not be overlooked. The length we ride depends very much upon where we sit in the saddle. A length that appears almost short when sitting in the centre of the saddle becomes quite long if we slide ourselves back. It is a little difficult to give exact calculations, but the proportion is, roughly, 4 inches in the saddle to 1 inch on the leather.

Before, therefore, we can decide what length we are riding we

FIG. 7.

A man going to jump a 4-foot obstacle on his feet. Compare this position with—

FIG. 8.

—the position of a man hacking, where the horse's "suspension" is 4 feet.

FIG. 9.

This is the position of a man going to jump the biggest distance he possibly can. Note that the angle of the knee-joint is a right angle.

FIG. 10.

Compare that with the position of a jockey approaching a fence.

must have a guiding rule as to where we intend to sit. Fortunately, this rule is quite simple. We should sit always as far forward as possible. Although easy to state, it is not easy to carry out, because with the movement of the horse the tendency to slip backwards is always present. Nevertheless, we must do all we can to counteract this force, because it is of great importance to the horse.

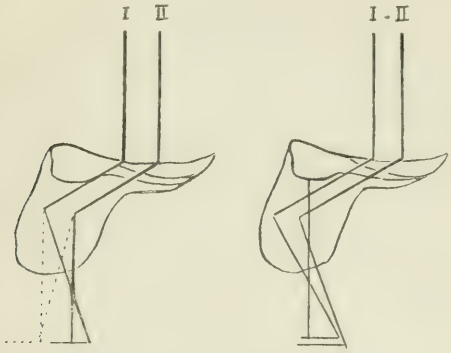


FIG. 11

Consequently the rider who sits in position No. I. can ride longer, with the same result, as the one who assumes position No. II. *Note.*—The rider in No. I. position is sitting comfortably, but if he slips back to position II. he will find his leathers much too long. This would be still more accentuated did he adopt the position of the dotted line. About 4 inches in the saddle represents about 1 inch in the length of leather.

It is important in the hunting field, and it is still more important in cavalry work.

Every infantryman knows how necessary it is to have the pack well up off his loins. The horse also knows what a strain weight on this part of his back is, but, unfortunately, he cannot tell us so, except by the exhaustion he may occasionally display.

So let us bear this in mind whenever we ride, and take three rules for guidance:

1. Sit as far forward in the saddle as possible.
2. Adjust the stirrups according to expected movement.
3. See that the stirrup leathers are vertical, and then it will be found that the balance of the body is established on safe foundations.

There are just two last points which should not be forgotten.

With a new pair of stirrup leathers it is always a good thing to number the holes, so that when we wish to alter them we can mention to the groom who may be helping us the other side which hole we are putting the tongue into.

But do not forget that leathers stretch very much, so that if we have ridden for the past week in a certain hole, do not think that that must be a permanency.

We must also remember that they do not necessarily stretch equally, and that it is as well to test them now and then in the saddle-room, so as to make sure that when we are in the saddle we are riding level.

PLATE V.

A GOOD EXAMPLE OF LENGTH OF REIN.

III

REINS

With your head and your heart held up,
And your heels and hands held down;
Your knees pressed close to your horse's sides,
And your elbows close to your own.

I FEAR we frequently hear it said, "Oh, So-and-so rides very well, he rides with such a nice long rein." I am glad to say that I think this idea is much less prevalent than it was. Why it should have ever been prevalent at all is one of those many mysteries that perplex us whenever we talk horsemanship.

First of all, whatever does it mean? Did it mean that the rider at the walk has long reins, then we would all be agreed at once. We do want long reins at this pace. But it is not applied to that at all. It is when the rider is jumping and the horse's head is free. This is what they refer to. If they see the reins flopping about throughout the parabola of the leap and on the impact, then this remark comes out. We have heard it often. Heaven knows, freedom during the leap is the essence of horsemanship, but we also want control during the approach and contact throughout the jump; without which, approbation is misplaced.

It may surprise those critics to hear that the rule is, the bigger the leap, the shorter the reins. The length of the rein is, indeed, a very important matter, and far too little study is given to this point. The length of the stirrup leather is, possibly, the first consideration of balance in the saddle; but, undoubtedly, the second, running it very close for the first place, is the length of the rein. The rules which apply to the one apply equally to the other. It is the law of preparedness—to be ready for the expected.

Thus, if we are hacking at a walk on a quiet horse or a tired hunter, it is absurd to expect anything "unexpected." We know we are only walking, and nothing else comes into our calculations.

In such circumstances it would be wrong to ride with short reins or short stirrups. But supposing we are walking on a fresh horse to the starting post, then we have every reason to expect the "unexpected," and he who rides with long reins in such circumstances deserves all he gets.

If we glance at Fig. 12 we see here a rider hacking along with an easy (but incorrect) seat. His reins are long, and he looks and feels both confident and comfortable. At this moment, however, his horse takes it into his head to give a little playful buck. Now, reins which are a suitable length for a horse with his nose

Fig. 12.

stuck out are very troublesome indeed when it is pushed in. We know that, if we lose contact, he will be off and away. So, if the rider is fairly experienced, he overcomes the difficulty by getting into the position in Fig. 13. We must remember that the buck has come suddenly, and he has had no time to shorten his reins. So all he can do is to push his hands back as far as possible so that he can keep control on the horse's mouth, and throw his body forward so as to maintain his balance in the saddle. This is his best solution, and it only works if we do not let the horse know the parlous state we are in. If we keep up the control until we can

shorten up, all is well; but if, in order to shorten up, we have to give him his head, it may be many yards before we can consider

Fig. 13.

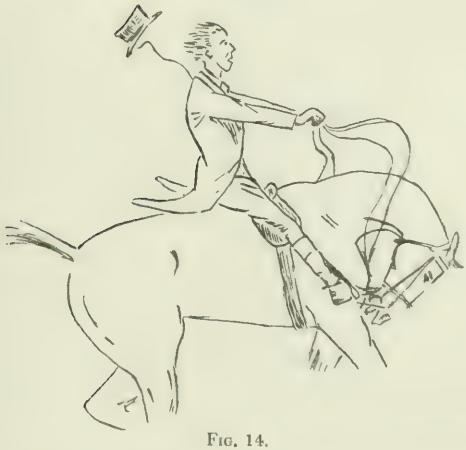


Fig. 14.

ourselves master of the situation. It can only be described as an expedient, not a solution.

If we find we are not ready enough to throw our bodies forward

at this particular moment, then, alas! no other recourse is open to us but to assume the attitude depicted in Fig. 14. Of course, we may not lose our hats and we may not throw our hands quite so high or open our mouths, but I can assure all my friends that these things do occur, and not only do they occur, but that instantaneous photography has shown us over and over again that the figure is under- rather than over-drawn.

These are the only two things that can occur if the unexpected happens when we are riding with our reins too long. But if we do happen to be having our reins the right length, let us look at Fig. 15.

Fig. 15.

Here the "untoward" event has been met with perfect ease. We see both control and balance, and the horse and rider are "one." All this has nothing to do with anything except the length of rein. It does not matter how accomplished a rider may be, if he is caught with his reins wrong, he cannot help himself. On the other hand, an inexperienced rider, if he is right in this particular when the buck or the shy does come, will find no difficulty in dealing with the situation. The subject is, however, far too complicated to be dismissed as easily as all this. The long rein is not a common fault in a beginner. It is rather that of the man who feels supremely

PLATE VI.

REINS TOO LONG.

confident and who is thoroughly at home in the saddle. The fault of the beginner is of riding with his reins too short.

There is nothing worse than seeing, as we often do, the rider trying to lead his horse along (*vide* Fig. 16). Here we see the over-short rein. But it is due to anxiety and lack of confidence, and as a rider increases in knowledge of what a horse can and does do, it is usual for this uncomfortable attitude to disappear.

It may now well be asked, What *is* the right length? It seems we must not ride short and we must not ride long, and the problem appears extremely difficult. The answer, although simple in prin-

Fig. 16.

ciple, is difficult of expression. Perhaps the best reply is "preparedness." In riding-school work it is usual to give the word of warning "Prepare to trot" before giving the actual command. The reason for this is that at the walk the class would be riding with fairly long reins. If the word "Trot" were given without a preparatory signal, everyone would find their reins much too long, and confusion would result. So that before breaking into the trot it is necessary to get into a position of preparedness. And so it is with all our problems. We must be prepared. Just as the rule for the stirrup is to ride as long as possible, provided due allowance has

been made for the expected, so the length at which we hold the reins should be as long as possible, provided contact can be continuously maintained. Thus, supposing we are going to jump a small fence out of a canter, we need not shorten up so very much. But if we are going to take on something very big and are going to gallop at it, then we must shorten our reins very considerably.

The hands should ordinarily rest in the lap, but when we are engaged in active riding, and the horse's head gets into a variety of positions, this is not possible. We should then regulate the length so that, at the moment when the horse's head is most tucked in, the hands should just touch the coat button. But in making this rule we must remember that not only does the horse's head come in, but our bodies go forward, so that sometimes we have to shorten up our reins very much indeed—much more so, in fact, than many people believe. It is this that so often causes trouble in jumping. We would like to get our bodies more forward, but we find our hands are in the way, and I think it is this error which has caused more "faults" in the show ring than any other.

Much discussion has taken place and a great deal has been written on how to hold the reins.

Whether the curb rein should be outside or inside in the hand, and whether pressure should be exerted on the bit by turning the little finger upward and inwards, or outwards, and so on.

These are niceties which may be all-important in *haute école*, or they may not, but where I feel sure they are entirely out of place is in the hunting field.

Can anyone say that they have ever noticed the smallest difference in the obedience of their mount if the bit rein is inside or outside?

The great point is to have it one way and keep it so, so that without having to look down, one can be sure pressure is being put upon the correct one.

We were always taught in the old days to have the snaffle outside; that is a very good way, and I am, personally, quite contented to leave it at that.

PLATE VII.

LOOK AT THE LENGTH OF REIN OF THESE JOCKEYS.

On landing they will have no control until they have "wound up."

But don't keep changing. Whichever way you have been taught, stick to.

I have frequently advocated riding with reins that have been shortened by the saddler a couple of feet, or even more. The ordinary length is much too long, because the spare ends flap about and get in the way. But there is another reason which is a very strong one. If they are thus shortened, we shall find it quite easy to alter the hold without losing contact by merely separating the hands for an instant to the full extent of the rein and slipping the fingers along them. With ordinary reins this manœuvre is quite impossible. We all know how often we have to keep on altering our grip on the reins, so that anything that makes it easier to do this is a matter that should not be overlooked. When jumping, too, the reins often slip through the fingers unintentionally. This is another point we ought to practise. Try to see that the reins are the same length after "the land" as before the "take off." There is, after all, no reason, when we come to think of it, why we should have less control after we have negotiated a fence than before we reached it.

Those of us who have finally decided not to sit back, if we can possibly avoid it, when landing over our fences, should assuredly reap all the benefits the adoption of the forward seat accords.

Not the least of these is this point of being able to use shortened reins.

If a horse bridles well, it is charming to be able to hack along the road, exercising perfect control, with the reins resting upon a finger.

With long reins such pleasures are quite unknown, and I can only recommend my readers to try the shortened rein, and I feel sure they would never go back to the old method.*

It may be asked, What happens when jumping a fence when the rider has been "left behind"? Does not the long rein come in very useful on these occasions, and would not the short rein cause a great lack of freedom to the horse? The answer is, under those circumstances, to drop the reins altogether, and pick them up after landing.

* Forty inches for each side or 80 inches in all for each rein is a good working length.

As the reins have only a little slack, this is a very simple matter, and presents no difficulty at all. The idea is eminently useful at polo, and many players have already taken to it. But as these are points entirely dependent upon the adoption of the "forward" seat, we must now look into this question as fully as possible in the next chapter.

PLATE VIII.

THIS IS THE FORWARD SEAT.

IV

THE "FORWARD" SEAT

Yet, hunting I must needs commende
In some degree and sorte
To be an honest, gainfull and
A necessary sporte.

ARGUMENTS about the so-called "novel" form of riding have now been pleaded and refuted for several years. We have its ardent supporters and its unbending opponents. Much ink has flowed and many a tongue has wagged to exhaustion in support of one side or other of the argument. And we still have those who are not convinced ready to take up the challenge against all and sundry who advocate a change in the historic art of horsemanship. So let us see if it is possible to put the case forward clearly, and sum up the situation that it may be easier for the general riding public to formulate a decision for themselves.

As a great many people who are opposed to the innovation do not quite understand what is meant by the forward seat, it must be necessary to make this point quite clear before going on any further. The forward seat does not mean that the rider is to be hunched up on the horse's neck with his knees knocking his teeth down his throat, as undoubtedly some people believe. It means nothing more or less than the abolition of the practice of swinging the body back on landing over a fence. It is, perhaps, somewhat of a misnomer to call it the forward seat. It could be better expressed as the balanced seat. Its advocates desire nothing more than that the body of the rider should be in a state of equipoise from the moment the horse takes off to the moment he lands. As the question is one of dynamics, it must be apparent to anyone who has even an elementary knowledge of this branch of mathematics that

in order to overcome the force of propulsion, a balance in motion can only be attained by proportionately throwing the weight in front of the statical balance. For example, when standing upright in the Tube we are in perfect equipoise as long as the train is stationary, but if we wish to remain balanced as the train starts to move, we find we have to lean forward in exact proportion to the propelling power of the engine.

The next point which we must make clear before going on is that this question of balance is based entirely on the axiom that the fulcrum is the foot—a point that has been already dealt with in the chapter on Balance.

The human frame was not intended to balance itself from the knees. Our anatomy is accurately worked out for the balance to be made, and only made, from the ball of the foot. So we can make the postulate quite clear. When the forward seat is spoken of, it is the advocacy of balance from the foot throughout the parabola of the leap. We can now start to examine the contentions which are constantly raised in its disfavour. Some, wishing to avoid the pitfalls of reasoned argument and hoping by a thrust from an unexpected quarter to silence opposition, point out that as Fred Archer, Bay Middleton, Tom Firr, and other well-known riders of the past were able to perform such prodigies when using the old-fashioned seat, any change would appear to be not only unnecessary but immodest. To these there can be but one answer : the part of *laudator temporis acti* can be carried so far that all progress or improvement becomes abhorrent.

A very large number of people think it is not only very uncomfortable landing in this way, but that there is positive danger, especially if the horse pecks or there is a drop fence. This is a point much more worth discussing than the previous one, and we will go into it as fully as possible.

Firstly, let us visualise what happens to the rider whose body is back when his horse pecks. As the peck takes place the rider naturally leans further back still, so as to overcome the jar of impact, if he can. If he does, let us see what happens. He must let the

ALTHOUGH THE RIDER IS LEANING FORWARD, THIS IS *NOT* THE FORWARD SEAT.

The strain upon the stirrup leathers in this position on landing is very great. The rider's knees should be pointed, and the shock of impact absorbed in the muscles of the knee-joint.

reins slip through his fingers, so that at the very moment when the horse requires collecting, the rider is incapable of doing so, and cannot, in fact, do anything until he has gathered his reins up again. He has, by leaning back, placed weight upon the loins, which is the one part that should be free of any pressure, particularly at this juncture. So that, as far as the horse is concerned, he is making two faults. He cannot collect him or help him with the reins immediately after landing, and he is inconveniencing him with his weight being in the wrong place. So much for the horse. Now how about the rider? His body was back during the downward portion of the parabola. As he lands the body goes further back, and if the fulcrum be taken from the foot he is entirely unbalanced. But if we take it from the seat bones, the tendency would be for the body to strike the saddle on impact with some force. Good riders are able to counteract this tendency by absorbing the shock to a certain extent in the muscles of the knee, but the majority, not so adroit, take it on the stirrup irons—and a very serious strain it is. Before leaving this point it may be of interest to know how and why it is so many leathers break in racing and in point-to-points, etc., and why old racing hands are so anxious to see that they are new or nearly new before starting. The reason is nothing less than the jar the rider gives to them when landing over his fences with his feet forward. The strain is very great. It has been worked out that it is from three to five times the weight of the rider, and varies not as the rider but as the horse! A heavy horse causes a greater strain upon the leathers than a lighter one. This is a serious burden for the horse to take on his forelegs every time he lands over a fence, and the advocates of the backward seat have a good deal to explain away to get over this point. Again, as the rider's body is back, he is incapable of getting it forward again until after the peck is over, and has, therefore, no control over his body at this moment. If, therefore, the peck develops into almost a fall, the position of the rider is perilous, and he is very frequently deposited, while the horse, at last relieved of the weight on the wrong place, recovers

himself and goes on. I think this is a fair picture of the "backward" rider negotiating a fence when a peck takes place.

Now let us see how the "forward" seat man gets on. On landing, the horse has free loins and is therefore in a good position to recover himself. The rider has short reins, and as his body is balanced he has control of himself as well as his horse. He is in a position instantly to collect him and help him to his feet. The jar of impact is absorbed primarily in the muscles of the knee and ankle joints, and, secondly, by the hands which are then resting in the nape of the horse's neck. Any tendency that there may be to be pitched forward is with great ease counteracted by these methods. This position is one of great importance to a hunting man, because, should he land into bog or cart ruts or wish suddenly to avoid something hitherto unseen, he can do so in a way that would be utterly impossible with the backward seat.

The next point that is raised is that the forward seat may be, and undoubtedly is, very excellent for the show ring, but it is quite out of place in either the hunting field or the steeplechase. The answer to this is that there can be but one right way. Three constants are to be found in all forms of horsemanship, no matter where we are or what we are doing. The three are : (1) *The Horse*, which is still a horse, whether he canters in the show ring, extends himself in the steeplechase, or gallops in the hunting field ; (2) *gravitation*, which applies to everything at all times without variation ; (3) *motion, propulsion or dynamics*, what you will. These laws must also be obeyed, always. These three are our constants, no matter what we are doing. The variation is only of degree. The horse goes faster or slower, jumps higher or shorter as may be, and what is right for the small jump must also be right in a greater degree for the big jump. There can be no alteration in fundamentals. Gravity is again a degree. There is a greater force of impact when landing over a big fence than over a small one, but the law is the same. Propulsion is a case of degree once more. There is more dynamic force when jumping a fence in a steeple-

PLATE X.

THE RIGHT POSITION DURING A "PECK."

chase than in the hunting field, but the difference is of degree alone. If, therefore, a principle has been found correct in one form of riding, it is *correct for all*. If we have discovered the right seat in the *manège*, then it is the right seat for all and every form of horsemanship whatever. It is said that it may be easy enough to sit a horse forward in the show ring, but to do it in a race is quite another story. This argument is like saying $2 \times 2 = 4$, but $2 \times 2 \times 2$ does not equal 8.

Curiously enough, the difficulty does not increase with speed. To jump a fence "all out" is much easier than to jump one in a collected manner, and the most difficult feat of all is to jump one from a standstill.

The reason for this is merely the question of variation of speeds.

If we are standing in a railway carriage and the train goes off with a jerk, we are all precipitated into the laps of the seated passengers. But if the train is travelling at 40 miles an hour and it is increased to 60 miles an hour, we hardly notice any difference.

So it is in riding. The horse that walks up to a fence and jumps suddenly increases his speed with a jerk from, say, 4 miles per hour to a pace equal to 20 miles an hour; but if he is galloping at his fence, the variation is perhaps only from 30 miles an hour to 35 miles per hour, which is a very different proportion.

Consequently the faster the leap the easier it is.

Landing has already been dealt with. The jar is not so great for either horse or rider when the body is forward. But if the horse pitches on landing or does anything the rider does not expect, it must be remembered he is master of his fate and captain of his body (which the back rider is not), and he can lean back if he wishes. Not that it is to be recommended, but he at least does maintain his own volition. It should also be pointed out that, supposing English people cannot perform this feat without danger of falling off, it is done, and has been done for years, abroad. It is no new "stunt" that is being advocated; it has been adopted on the Continent for generations.

The final argument is that it puts too great a strain upon the

horse's forelegs. Let us examine this for a moment. This means that if a rider leans back, less of him reaches the ground than if he sits forward. If so, where! oh where! has the little bit gone? No, no. This argument is the final stand of the last ditcher, but it is no stronghold. If we weigh 11 stone and jump up into the air off our feet, we land, no matter in what position, with the weight on our feet of that 11 stone plus the force of gravity. Nothing can make it more, try as we will. So it is in riding; and if the seat be forward, it cannot possibly be more than it would be if it were back. Should, however, the rider be left behind at all and come down thump on the saddle or into the stirrups, then, indeed, it can be more, because the rider has jumped higher than the horse and has to come down further. Although we cannot increase our weight by leaning forward, we can reduce the jar by "deferred impact," or by absorbing the concussion in the muscles of the knee and ankle in a way the backward seat cannot do. So the advocates of the backward seat must be very cautious how they trot out this contention, as it quickly reacts upon them.

This concludes the arguments which have been used against this modern form of horsemanship. But paper alone has never gained a victory; cogency in argument often vexes rather than convinces. So we do not ask the hunting man who has ridden many years in the old way to change his habits. We can only suggest to the younger generation that, if they will try the method advocated, they will find they will get better enjoyment out of their day's hunting, with fewer falls and greater confidence. Also they will find that they are doing their horses a great service, which they will appreciate to the full. Remember, the golden rule for the leap is: Head free and *loins* free.

Riding is, however, a complex art, and although it may be comparatively simple to evolve rules, it is quite another matter to carry them out.

We shall find that although we may be determined to ride forward over our fences in future, we are always coming across instances where we cannot succeed.

THIS IS THE OLD-FASHIONED SEAT.

Those who think they are saving their horses forelegs by leaning back should notice here, that the whole of the rider's weight is concentrated upon a line in continuation of the near fore, which must, therefore, be taking the fullest weight of the rider possible.

It will be as well therefore if we examine the reason for these difficulties.

There are only three :

1. If the horse takes off sooner than we expect him to.
2. If the horse jumps much bigger than we expect, or if we are riding too long (*vide* Chapter III.).
3. If the horse is a little "sticky" and we have to drive him at the fence up to the last stride.

So that, now, when we do find ourselves a bit back over our fences sometimes, we know the reason why, and that is a great help.

Before bringing this chapter to a conclusion, there is yet one point upon which I have hardly touched, and yet it is of considerable moment.

The opponents of the forward seat are constantly raising the following point. They say that they grant the possibilities of the seat when jumping normal fences in a normal way. But they ask with unconcealed apprehension what happens when jumping a drop fence, or when the horse pecks badly on landing.

They feel that if they were to lean forward under such circumstances they would surely be pitched over the horse's head.

There are two solutions to this problem :

Firstly, the man who is leaning forward can lean back whenever he chooses, and if he feels the pitch is likely to be too great, he can quite justifiably do so.

But if he wishes, and is able to ride with scientific correctness, he will try to keep forward.

The shock of impact should be absorbed in the muscles of the knee joint, and whatever inclination there may be to fall forward can be overcome by pressing the hands against the horse's neck.

This has the double advantage of helping both the rider and the horse, because it insures the horse having a fully free head during his recovery.

But this absorption of the shock of impact in the muscles of the

knees can only be done if the lower part of the leg is kept well back, as this diagram shows.

This is an important point, and should be thoroughly understood. It is this that enables the rider to ride over "drop" fences with comparative ease, and to overcome the difficulty of collecting a horse after a peck.

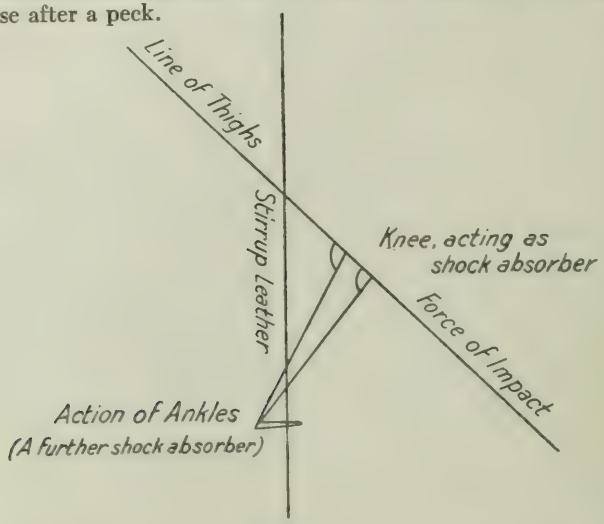


Fig. 17.

This question of the drop fence is nearly always brought up by the "back seat" advocates, so that it is necessary for me to give the point rather more attention than it really deserves.

No one likes a drop fence at any time, and anyone avoids them as much as possible. We do, of course, have to tackle them now and then, so, although not of first importance, the question must be considered.

Before the war I was competing in a horse show on the Continent, in which a drop "in and out" was one of the obstacles.

These were the dimensions: A fence 3 feet 4 inches in height,

PLATE XII.

THIS IS A POSITION WE ALL GET INTO SOMETIMES WHEN THE HORSE TAKES OFF A LITTLE SOONER THAN EXPECTED.

with a drop of 1 foot 8 inches (making a five-foot fall from the top of the fence).

The road was 23 feet across, and the jump out was over plain timber 4 feet 2 inches in height.

This, I may say, is an obstacle that would stop a good many of the field out hunting if they came across it.

But leaning back at the drop was not even contemplated by any of the competitors, for it would have spelt disaster. It would have been impossible to collect the horse in time to get him on to his hocks quick enough to clear the formidable rail in front.

If it is necessary, therefore, to lean forward when negotiating a very difficult obstacle, how can anyone suggest that we should lean back when tackling anything easier?

I was discussing the question of the forward seat a little while ago with a riding instructor, and as the views he gave are very much what many people hold, I quote them from memory :

"This seat is no doubt very useful at times, but it is absurd to lay down any hard and fast rules. Each fence has to be jumped in its own way, according to the style, action and temper of the horse, and there are many occasions when the forward seat is impracticable."

Statements such as these are the enemy of progress and the bugbear of instruction.

They tell nothing and explain nothing. But the remark is sufficiently correct to carry conviction with those who cannot think things out for themselves. But it leads us nowhither, and the pupils are just as much in the dark as before.

They only feel that if there are no rules they can do just as they please. This is why they take so long to become proficient. They have to learn from their own experience, instead of that of their instructor. In teaching, pupils must be taught. The instructor must be able to show them what is the perfect position during the leap, and the reasons for an imperfect one, and they themselves should have a practical grasp of what is actually required before they can be considered past the stage of pupilage.

Then, when they are crossing a country to hounds, they will be able to put their knowledge to practice. When they make an error they will know it is an error. Perfection should always be the aim, even though it may seldom be attainable. But without the guiding rule the unfortunate tyro has nothing to take as a standard with which to compare his own efforts.

Note.—About the year 1870, a certain Mr. King brought out a special saddle, which made the stirrup iron hang much further back than ordinarily.

He was much averse to any weight being forward at all, as the following quotation shows:

"The weight of the rider over the withers causes strain in the hindquarters (?) because they have to lift the extra weight on the forefeet!

"The evil system of jockeys riding with forward stirrups and with their hands leaning upon the horse's neck causes strains, capped hocks, overshot joints, and strained tendons, and even causes the hind fetlock joints to break off as if cut with a knife!"

This gentleman was an extremist, obviously.

PLATE XIII

ALWAYS LEAN FORWARD WHEN GOING DOWN STEEP PLACES.

V

THE APPROACH

If your horse be well bred, and in blooming condition,
Both up to the country and up to your weight,
Oh, then give the rein to your youthful ambition,
Sit down in your saddle and keep his head straight.

WHAT is the secret of presenting a horse at a fence so that he will jump it off his hocks, land a comfortable distance the other side, and give what is known as a "good feel"? Generally speaking, we find that with two fences out of three, although we manage to get over all right, we are aware that the horse was out of his stride and jumped off his forehand. When this occurs, we experience not a feeling of pleasure, but one of relief when we find ourselves safely on the other side. Sometimes we give him a jab in the mouth, say "Come hup," and call him an expletory quadruped; we seldom, if ever, put the blame on the right shoulders. On the other hand, when he does come up to the fence in his stride, springs off his hocks and lands well into the next field, what a different sensation it is, and how it adds to the pleasure and safety of hunting!

It is generally believed that it is too much to expect any man to reach the standard of being sure of his horse's stride every time, and hunting people generally are content with things as they are, and do not worry about these matters over-much. But there are many who delight in riding for riding's sake, and who are not content with anything less than perfection. It is for these that the study of the art of approach becomes fascinating, particularly as it is, probably, the most difficult art in the world. The reason for this is that we have to ride every horse in a slightly different way. Some horses are very easy, and when riding them we fancy we have mastered the problem, only to find ourselves woefully at sea when we get on to some less temperate mount. Fortunately, the rules are the same in all cases:

it is only the application which presents the difficulty. Our first trouble is that our horses have seldom been really schooled. The "made hunter" will certainly jump well enough, but we want something much more than that. We want him temperate, balanced and obedient to both leg and rein. This is a standard that can only be attained by continuous work and good horsemanship for many months. It is beyond the opportunity of some, or the inclination of others; but no matter. Let us know what to try for every time we take a fence, and each jump will be one more progressive experience.

Let us, first of all, realise what we ought not to do. Take the instance of a rider going to jump a rather big fence. We often see him getting what he calls a "good run" at it. He starts off very fast. He hits his horse very likely as a preliminary, so as to "get going" all the quicker. This, of course, only does harm. It excites the horse and distracts his attention. So off he goes at a fast gallop. As he approaches the fence, the horse, realising it looks rather formidable, is thinking (if he is allowed to think) how he is going to take off. We have often seen athletes when jumping taking a lot of little steps in their endeavour to get their take-off right. They are losing momentum thereby, and the fault is much criticised by trainers. This is what the horse is doing. He gets slower and slower until he reaches the fence. By this time he is often almost at a standstill, and bucks over. If there is a ditch on the far side, he may easily peck badly on landing, and the rider can congratulate himself if the incident is closed without mishap.

Then we have another kind—that of a fine free horse, of great leaping capacity. He goes "all out." No check or change about him. When about 12 feet away from the fence, another stride would put him too close; so, full of fun and freedom, he takes off from there. Alas! the rider is quite unprepared for such scope and courage. He is badly "left behind," and the horse gets a terrible jab in the mouth. A few more of those, and the horse will jump with freedom no more, and a great-hearted horse is ruined. These are examples of how not to do it.

We will now examine the requirements for the perfect leap. The first necessity is to have a temperate horse. No one can control with any accuracy horses that are excited at every fence. So that our first essential is control. Our second is that of growing momentum, so that when we have decided to "put" our horse at the fence (which is at a distance of about 30 feet or so, according to the size of the jump), each stride from there should be of increasing dimension. In this way we get the impetus on taking off to throw us well into the next field, clear of all hidden ditches or obstacles. It can well be described as :

Umpty, umpty, umpty, one, two, three, over !

In other words, a steady canter up to the last three strides, and then one—TWO—THREE. Diagrammatically we can show it thus :

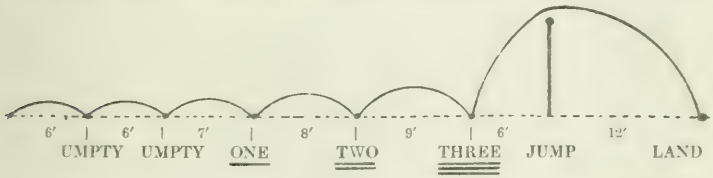


Fig. 18.

This is, of course, perfection. We have control up to 30 feet, then increasing impetus, a perfect take-off 6 feet from the obstacle, and a pleasurable land 12 feet the other side. That is what we should endeavour to do with every fence we meet out hunting. We shall not succeed, but with practice and training we shall improve every day. We shall not always be able to make three good strides. We may have to fit it in with two. It rather reminds me of dactyls and spondees. We may have a long and two shorts, two shorts and a long, perhaps, or two longs. We might even make up Latin verses as we go along. To hear the huntsman chant

"Arma vir|umque can|o"

or a whipper-in mutter

"Vide | o meli | ora pro | boque"

on approaching their fences would be an inspiriting novelty! And yet we require our cadences just as much in equitation as in elegiacs. Fortunately for many of us, an equally good result can be obtained in English, and I can suggest the following exhortation, with mental rather than verbal expression, and an increasing accent on the "longs," thus:

"Now come a | long and get | o ver."

This gives a good idea of the final strides, with the spring on the first syllable of "over." But we shall not find it always possible to try it in the hunting field. We shall often find that the crowd will not give us room, and we have to get over as best we may. Sometimes we shall find that when we want to go "umpty" the horse does not. Sometimes he will "yaw" at us and drag the reins through our fingers. Sometimes he will insist on racing at the fence, and we shall be unable to restrain him. But no matter. If the horse is not thoroughly trained these things will happen. But as long as we know what we want to do, we are a long way ahead of him "who knows not, and knows not that he knows not."

People often speak of "lifting" a horse, and others of "giving the office," but they are sometimes not quite sure of what they mean. It is, really, the moment at which control changes to freedom. As we approach the fence we must have restraint and exercise (if we can) a guiding influence upon the movements and stride of our mount. But when we come to the moment when we decide the horse should "take off," then we should lean our bodies forward, and give him his head. A slight pressure of the knees will also assist the horse to realise what is required. Even with badly trained horses, once they are assured that they will have a free head they will very soon learn to "take off" when given the "office" in

PLATE XIV.

THE RESULT OF LACK OF MOMENTUM IN THE "APPROACH."

this way. The "short one" so many horses put in before jumping is the penalty we have to pay for riders who do not "go" with their horses as they jump, get left behind, and then jab their mouths. It is wonderful how quickly horses will drop the habit directly they feel confident that their rider will give them the necessary freedom.

VI

"HANDS"

His hand was like a chamois glove,
And riding was his chief delight.

THE question of "hands" is not nearly so intricate or subtle as many people suppose. There is nothing supernatural, or even intuitive, in it; it is a matter of nothing more or less than adaptability. How often we hear, "'Hands' are born, not made," "Born with good 'hands,'" "The gift of good 'hands,'" and similar expressions, which all have a sufficient element of truth in them for acceptance by those who do not wish or have not the time to probe into verities deeply. These expressions in themselves might be allowed to stand were they entirely harmless; but, unfortunately, they have a knack of giving false impressions to the uninitiated and of damping their aspirations.

To those who unhesitatingly accept this doctrine it suggests that no rider who starts late in life can have good "hands," that it is necessary to be practically born in the saddle to possess them, and that no amount of schooling or tuition or practice on their part will make any difference. In consequence, the outlook is hopelessly unpromising.

As a matter of fact, it matters not *when* our riding starts, but *how*. Although "hands" are born, in the sense that attributes like intelligence, strength, courage, etc., are born, the rest is entirely a matter of instruction and experience.

Then, again, we have another side to the misappreciation of the dictum. Have we not heard people (very often ladies) claim to have good "hands," when all they do is to leave their horses entirely alone, relying upon good manners in their mount to see them through? These people suffer from the mistake that, if "hands" are

born, it requires neither instruction nor knowledge to perfect what is already inherent, and that "hands" is nothing more than slack reins and a delicacy of expression amounting almost to timidity.

So let us see if we can express this obscurity in such a way as to clear up the subject and arrive at a definite understanding as to what "hands" really are.

It is not so difficult to explain as would at first appear. It is a trinity composed of balance, confidence and sympathy—each of which, be it noted, may be learned.

The first point, balance, is easy to discuss. When a rider is off his balance, the tendency is to hang on to something, and the probability is that it will be the reins. This fault occurs to us all, whether we are accomplished or not: we all are sometimes off our balance, and we all find ourselves, sometimes unwittingly, hanging on to the horse's mouth. We notice it very often in the photographs of jockeys riding steeplechases, where, in the midst of the leap, they are "left behind" and can only remain the "plate" by the use of the reins. It is easy to see this. A horse naturally jumps with his mouth closed. Look at the jumping photographs which, in the season, appear almost daily, and see how few horses keep their mouths shut. This is an instance of bad "hands," just as much as that of the tyro who has lost his balance at the trot and is attempting to retain his seat by a firm hold on the bridle. However good the rider's "hands" may be in ordinary circumstances, and no matter how accomplished he may be, at this particular moment his "hands" are bad, because he is off his balance.

So let the beginner take confidence once more, for no one can have perfect "hands" until perfect balance is attained. But, at the same time, in all ordinary circumstances, such as the trot and the canter and the small leap, it is not difficult to attain a balance which may be described as faultless.

We will not go deeper into this subject in the present chapter, because the attributes of balance have been already dealt with in Chapter I. We will content ourselves with the statement that.

so long as a man retains his balance in the saddle, he possesses *ipso facto* the first attribute of "hands."

The next point is that of confidence. A rider may have a perfect balance, but, lacking "nerve," it is worth nothing. There is nothing so soul-destroying to the horse as the nervous twitch upon the reins, and it is this, perhaps, more than anything else, that makes refusers and jibbers. I remember how a very high-couraged hunter in Leicestershire some years ago carried his owner supremely for two seasons without making a mistake. The horse was sold, and the new owner never got him outside the stable yard. Here was a case of lack of confidence. He was generally accepted in the ordinary way as a good rider, but he was not confident in his new mount, and the nervous twitch betrayed it. He soon sold the horse at a loss to another man who did not experience the same difficulty, as the horse went perfectly well with him.

We see the same thing very frequently in the approach to a fence. The man who cannot keep his hands still has his nerves to blame; he has not the necessary confidence. It has an immediate reaction upon the horse, and it works in this way: No horse minds restraint during the approach—in fact, it is usually necessary; but he must realise that when the leap does come he will have freedom. Consequently, the steady, firm hold before the jump is not what he minds—in fact, it gives him confidence. What he really minds is the feeling that when he does jump he is going to get a jab in the mouth, and that nervous twitch as he approaches the fence tells him at every stride what the consequences are bound to be when he makes his leap. The natural jumper of high courage will very quickly be brought to refusing persistently when ridden in this manner. Consequently, confidence is the second attribute of "hands."

We place "sympathy" last in our trio because, if a rider has acquired both balance and confidence, he has gone far in the art of horsemanship. Confidence means so much that many a bold horseman becomes almost first-class, even though he may be a bit of a "butcher." But to be actually first-class he must have the charm-

PLATE XV.

"GOOD HANDS" ARE DEPENDENT UPON BALANCE, CONFIDENCE, AND SYMPATHY.

ing gift of sympathy. It includes patience and thoughtfulness, and understanding, and knowledge. We can have no real sympathy without all these attributes. We must be able to understand what the horse is thinking, to think "objectively," or, in other words, to be able to put ourselves in his position. Under this category, let us take the example of the horse that will not walk. The rider who is out of sympathy gets impatient and is constantly jabbing him in the mouth. It does not have the effect intended—it has, in fact, the reverse effect, and a vicious circle is created. The horse arrives home in a "muck sweat" and the rider in a bad temper. However well such a man may ride his horse across country, no one would accord him the virtue of good "hands." Hence, we see that the third main attribute is sympathy. If he were the first-class rider we may paint him, he would try to understand why the horse would not walk. It might be that the horse was a youngster full of the *joie de vivre*, in which case patience is the only cure; it might be that there was a horse in front causing excitement—in that case thoughtfulness might effect something, and the rider might wait until the leading horse was out of sight. It might be that the horse was thinking of his manger and was anxious to get home. Then, with "understanding" we can become both patient and sympathetic. Finally, it might be due to a pinched wither, or ill-fitting bit, and this is where knowledge comes to our aid.

So these are the three salient points in the mysterious art of "hands"; but we cannot leave the subject without going a little further.

No one can be said to have good "hands" who has not understood the subtleties of combining hand and leg. A horse "behind his bridle" is one where the hand is used proportionately with greater strength than the leg, as in the case of a sluggish horse. A horse "into his bridle" is one that can soon be made a puller, if care is not exercised by judicious handling. The art of handling a horse is that of producing the perfect adjustment between leg and rein, whereby without apparent effort the horse will obey the rider instantaneously. It is no good talking about "good hands"

until by study of equitation we can produce such results. The hunting man who hacks along a road on a trusty hunter with a loose rein is not displaying good "hands," any more than a beginner on a wooden horse. He may have all the attributes of hands—balance, confidence, and sympathy—but at that moment is not riding, is being merely conveyed, and, in so far as equitation goes, he must not, on such an occasion, be taken as an example. He is riding at rest and, as a horseman, is a negative quantity while sodoing. "Hands" are not exemplified by the loose rein, but by delicate contact, which can be attained in practice by almost anyone who is determined to improve.

Finally, we must deal with the question of pulling. It is often asked in what way can good "hands" prevent a keen horse from going faster than is wanted. The answer is that it is not so much a question of "hands" as of experience. When we are riding a keen horse, we must shorten our reins and keep them short—a difficult matter; we should ride a hole shorter in our stirrup leathers and avoid a dead pull on the mouth. The keener the horse the more we should hold him with our knees, remembering always that strength should be exerted primarily by the legs.

The keen horse becomes a puller when the riding has been such that he does not understand what is required of him. The constant dead pull on the mouth at slow paces can but inappreciably increase as the horse goes faster, but the fact of it being there gives pain, and the horse's instinct is to gallop away from the discomfort. The pull remains and the animal is usually unaware that the rider wishes him to stop. A horse properly ridden may be keen, but he will never "pull," for the simple reason that the expert rider does not pull at him.

The best rule when riding a keen horse is to let him gallop on, under the control of the legs, until you want him to stop. Then, by word of mouth and the usual "aids," tell him firmly what is wanted, and it will be found that the horse, after all, is an intelligent animal and not the utter fool many unsympathetic riders would have us believe.

It is here where we have the three gifts of "hands" well exemplified. The balance which alone enables us to control; the confidence to let him gallop on; and the sympathy which gives us the comprehension of the desires, the thoughts, the eagerness and the generosity of the animal which would carry us so well if we could only understand.

NOTE.—"A good hand gives when the horse takes, and takes when he gives. A well trained hand gives when the horse gives, and takes when he takes, and that instantly."—FIELIS.

VII

THE SCHOOLED HUNTER

He loved the English countryside,
The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,
The lichen on the apple trees,
The poultry ranging on the lees.

IT is the privilege of few to be in a position to school and train their own hunters. A large proportion spend their autumns away and only return for the hunting season, and others are too busy with other things to give the time. Even those who have the time often have not the skill, the knowledge, or the inclination. Consequently, a great many hunting people have to trust entirely to the dealer from whom the horse is purchased and to the groom who rides him at exercise. This being the case, it is not surprising that the standard of training is low and that it is the exception to see a properly schooled horse in the hunting field. It is, in fact, not clear to many people what is actually required of a horse that is as thoroughly schooled as he should be. As long as he jumps when required, without falling unduly, and does not run away or buck or kick, is not too impetuous, and is a comfortable ride, that is generally all that is expected. Indeed, there is little more that can be done in the ordinary way, because the higher levels of excellence can only be attained by much study and training, both on the part of the horse and the rider.

Of what avail would it be for the dealer to spend months in bringing his horses to a high pitch of excellence if the purchasers were unacquainted with those higher flights of horsemanship which are necessary in such circumstances? We cannot have perfection in the horse without excellence in the rider. Without the latter all the training which has produced the former is thrown away. But, however keen the owner may be, unless he can afford the time it must always be impossible for him to attain anything more than the general level of horsemanship, and if a standard of safety and enjoy-

PLATE XVI.

HE SHOULD BE WILLING TO JUMP AWAY FROM OTHER HORSES.

ment is reached, there is little more that can be done. It is, therefore, in no spirit of criticism that these lines are penned. They are merely intended to help anyone who has the time to devote to the making of his hunters and who is anxious to get a fuller enjoyment out of his day's sport than before.

First of all, let us see what a hunter should and should not do. He should not rush his fences, he should not refuse, he should jump off his hocks and not his forehand; in other words, he should give the rider "a feel." He should have sufficient impetus to land well into the next field, so as to avoid any hidden ditch or other obstacle, without being too keen. He should not be sticky or jump from a standstill, and as he approaches the fence his momentum should be increasing until the take-off, and not decreasing as we so often see. He should understand the meaning of a blind ditch, and he should be so handy that he can be turned off the road to jump a fence whenever required. He should be a good hack and understand the "aids," and he should have learnt to bridle and carry himself in a balanced manner and not have his nose stuck out like a poker. He should be accustomed to hounds, and should understand the opening and closing of gates. He should be quiet to mount wherever and whenever required, and have learnt both to walk and trot. He should allow other horses to gallop past him without thinking it a race meeting, and yet he should be keen enough to gallop on without urging. If these are our requirements, it is wonderful how much can be done in their attainment by careful work during the cubbing season, especially if a paddock is available which can be used as an open *manège*.

Schooling for jumping can best be done by dividing the paddock into halves with a long low line of unbreakable rails of not more than 2 feet 6 inches in height; but if so much timber as this is too expensive, it could be arranged so that it is unbreakable and fixed and without wings (except in the early stages when they may be necessary). Get the horse to jump off either leg at will from alternate reins, and if there is any attempt at rushing, turn him away. Continue to do this until the rushing ceases and he ap-

proaches the fence collectedly and temperately. Avoid furze or bush jumps. They do no good whatever; in fact, the only results they achieve are harmful. Do not be afraid your horse will sicken of being jumped too often. Provided the ground is soft, the fence is low, and he suffers no discomfort from the rider, it is well-nigh impossible to overjump; in fact, it is important to jump often and every day so that the lessons can be learnt quickly and thoroughly. To teach the horse to avoid blind ditches it will be necessary to manufacture one and lunge him over it. A very little experience will teach him to regard all such things with respect.

We should remember that well-trained horses never refuse; but in our training if we have a refuser the rule should be not to punish but to lower the rail. Also remember that a sharp spur has never taught a horse to jump. Keep your sharp spur for *manège* work at slow paces, such as shouldering, and use blunt spurs for all other occasions.

It will be found very useful to mount from a block, because it teaches the horse not to fear having the rider on higher ground than himself. Horses so trained are much easier to mount in the open, because they have learnt to stand still where they are placed and not fidget about. The horse should learn to dissociate the feeling of the rider's foot in the stirrup with the idea of motion, and he should not be asked to move—in fact, should be restrained from moving—until the rider himself has picked up his reins properly and given his mount the proper "aid" for the walk.

Do not forget the motto of the French, "Être tranquille, toujours tranquille." To teach an impetuous horse to walk is a matter of much patience, as it is a question of the association of ideas. Horses are usually led to believe that the matter of carrying a rider on his back implies the excitement of the gallop, the leap, or the race, and as long as these are inseparable no improvement can ever be expected. With bad riders, with indifferent hands or hasty tempers, the horse, alas! also associates being ridden with pain, and this is another fruitful cause of this troublesome habit. The quickest way to cure—or, I should say, allay—the habit is to take the animal

PLATE XVII.

A WELL-TRAINED HORSE SELDOM REFUSES.

out every day for long walks alone. Never trot or canter, but do everything possible to suppress any form of excitement. It will be found that even the worst offender will soon give up jogging, but, of course, the tendency will always be apparent again when anything exciting happens. With young horses we can only hope to improve, but not entirely to eradicate it. It is, however, a matter we can always work at, no matter how we are situated, because much can be done when hacking to or from a meet, or whenever we are in the saddle, in fact. It is a valuable lesson to remember that tranquillity and freedom from pain or annoyance spell comfort. Horses sometimes won't walk because they have a shoe which is pinching them, a bit that does not fit, or something which is rubbing them somewhere. So it is as well to look to these things, too, when we find our mount unusually intractable. If we think of all these points in the cubbing season and practise and school as much as we are able, it is wonderful how much can be done in a short time to improve both ourselves and our horses for the hunting season.

The question of "bridling" is somewhat complicated. We find that some horses with very light mouths and well set on necks "bridle" naturally, and very pleasant they are. But other horses either seem to have bad mouths or wooden necks, and don't give to the bit in the same way. These are not nearly so interesting to ride.

The question is, whether it is possible for the ordinary rider to get all horses to "bridle," or whether it is a pure characteristic of each horse. The answer is not an easy one to give.

In the Army, where horses are bought young and put through a long course of schooling, it is rare to find a horse that does not make some show of "bridling."

But with older horses the matter is much more difficult. A great deal depends upon the natural mouth.

People sometimes ask what "bridling" actually is and how it is attained.

It can be expressed in the following way: Bridling is a true adjustment between the leg and rein—the leg being used for propulsion and the rein for restraint.

First, as we move off we press the horse with our knees "into his bridle." This action without the reins would very soon urge him into a gallop, but in proportion to the pressure of our leg, we use the restraining influence of the hand. This should cause the horse to bend his neck and play with his bit. When this occurs it is "bridling."

If the pressure on the rein is too strong for the "drive" given by the legs, then the horse is likely to become over-bent; if the pressure on the legs is too strong for the restraint given on the rein, then the flexion is not attained at all.

It should be remembered that there are two distinct flexions a horse can make with his neck, and that a flexion is only correct when it comes from the poll. This gives the horse a true carriage, with the head properly placed.

But horses are quaint creatures. However much we try, some won't bridle naturally. Sometimes a horse will seem to "sulk" when going away from home, and will only bridle happily when he has his nose towards his manger!

But it is worth a great deal if we can get our horses to do it at all. The hack to the meet becomes a quite different thing to the usual jog-trot with a loose rein and no play upon the bit.

In fact, until we have ridden a well-schooled horse, who is obedient to the slightest pressure of leg or rein, and who will bridle not only at a walk but at a trot and canter, we really have not experienced the true pleasures of riding.

VIII

THE DIAGONAL

'Twere vain to tell the magic spell
That fires the hunter's eye.

EVERYBODY knows that, when a horse trots, the near fore and off hind touch the ground almost simultaneously, followed by the off fore and the near hind. It is a "two-step," in fact, making the difference between the "four-step" walk or the "three-step" canter. It is, therefore, known as the diagonal cadence.

When we rise in our stirrups during the trot, we do so on one or other of these two diagonals. That is to say, we rise as the near fore and off hind touch the ground, and sink on the off fore and near hind; or we rise from the throw of the off fore and near hind, and sink on to the near fore and off hind as they touch the ground. This sounds, perhaps, a little confusing; so, as the hind foot reaches the ground at practically the same moment as the fore foot, we can say that we rise on either the off fore and sink on the near fore, or *vice versa*. When a rider sinks on the near fore, that is described as being on the "near" diagonal, and when on the other foot, as being on the "off" diagonal.

When schooling a young horse, this is a point which is usually overlooked, and the horse gets into a habit of carrying his rider on one of these diagonals alone. As a horse can have a one-sided mouth, so can he have a one-sided body. When this is the case, the rider will find it awkward to ride on the unaccustomed side. If he succeeds for a stride or two, he will soon find that the horse will not have it, and before he knows where he is he will be back on the old diagonal. A horse's devices for "replacing" his rider are most amusing and interesting, and makes even the dullest hack a matter of considerable interest. There are three usual ways.

Perhaps the most common is for the horse to make the change himself, by putting in a half-stride, whereupon the rider finds himself very quickly "put in his place." This works very well as a rule; but if the trick is known and guarded against, then the next device is for the horse to "break." The rider checks him and brings him back to a trot, only to find he is back on to the diagonal the horse likes best. Another device is to shy at a heap of stones, or any old thing that will make an excuse, and "there we are again."

Of course, these little pleasantries of the road only occur when the rider knows exactly what is happening and is determined to ride upon the objectionable diagonal. "One-sided" horses are uncomfortable on the unaccustomed side, so that unless we do it intentionally we are not aware of the partiality, because we never find ourselves upon it for more than a stride or two. There are a good many horses, usually those of the phlegmatic sort, who do not mind which diagonal they are ridden on; but unless they have been trained to be "double-sided," we shall find that one is much more comfortable than another. This is, of course, a fault. A properly schooled horse should go comfortably and readily on either. I remember on parade in the old days, I sometimes used to find my sword would swing in an uncomfortable way so that the hilt would catch me on the hip. It was long before I discovered that the reason was that I was on a different diagonal. Although this matter may appear to be one of small moment, such is not the case. The sinking of our bodies in the saddle exercises certain muscles in the horse's back, and if we always sink on one diagonal we use those muscles entirely, to the detriment of the other set of muscles. This fact will have no apparent effect when riding short hours in the saddle; but when we have long distances to go it is a matter of considerable importance, as, for example, during a long march with cavalry, when the question of fatigue is of great moment. But I fear it is a standard of horsemanship a little over the head of the average recruit as I have found out, sadly enough. In long-distance riding, such as used to be practised on the Continent, it is a well-known matter, and they usually ride by rule, such as a change

every hour, or even every five kilometres. In this way the muscles on the horse's back get uniformly exercised and rested. But such assistance could not, of course, be given, unless the horse had been schooled to "double side."

So here is a little problem I will give my readers, the solving of which may make their next hack a very interesting one. You are sitting in the saddle at the walk. You want to trot. You decide from the first moment you rise from the saddle that you will start on a given diagonal. How is it done?

Then we have one more problem. You are trotting. Without check, how do you change from one diagonal to the other?

The answers are as follow: Before breaking into the trot, watch the movement of the horse's shoulder upon the side on which you wish to sink. As that shoulder is *back*, you rise and force the horse into the trot. Then it stands to reason that you will sink when that shoulder is forward, or, in other words, when that foot touches the ground.

The reply to the second problem is this: All that is necessary is, when the body is raised, to check sinking for what appears to be a half-stride, and then continue as before. It will be found the change has been easily and simply effected, without interfering with the horse in any way.

These are two little exercises which will give an added zest to a hack, and make us, perhaps, understand more about what we are really doing when we ride than if we just trot along thinking of other things. It is, after all, the humanities, the sympathy and the knowledge which attract horse and man. We cannot know too much, or take too much trouble in trying to realise the mind, the thoughts and feelings of the best servant man ever had.

IX

BITTING

I'll change my theme, and fondly dream—
True sportsmen pledge me here—
And fill my cup, and drink it up,
To saddle, spur, and spear.

WE often hear the expression "There is a key to every horse's mouth," and, like many other such statements, it sounds wise. As a sophistry it is repeated, repetition develops, and age mellows it into an accepted truth which it is heresy to dispute. I fear, however, that adages are of little value when hounds are running, our horse is pulling and there is a yawning ditch ahead. Experience alone must be our guide. Now, what is our experience in this particular matter? We have all had horses which "take hold" a bit. We have all had horses which carry their heads a bit too low or a bit too high. We have all had horses which tire us because they are too keen, and others which produce a similar result because they are too slow. We have had horses with light mouths or hard mouths; those that bridle and those that do not. Is it any reader's experience to find that any of these advantages, or disadvantages, can be permanently rectified by changing the bit?

I am convinced that the answer will be largely negative. The keen horse can be steadied by work or feeding, but not by severity. The more we pull at the horse the more he seems to pull at us, and the contest can continue until (as we sometimes know) the jaw is actually broken. So this method is obviously a false one. We cannot solve the problem by force alone. There is nothing new in this fact; it is one which is accepted by all experienced riders, and artifice is, therefore, adopted. High ports, low ports, sliding bars, twisted snaffles, chain snaffles, Hanoverian pelhams, Liverpool bits, gags and a hundred other devices are in use, and their respective merits are daily discussed in riding circles. But of what

avail is it all? Sometimes we think we can hold a horse better in this or that, and for a day or two it seems to work. But after a time we have to admit the problem has not been solved, and instead of fixing the blame on ourselves, we fly to some other ironmongery device of a greater or lesser degree of discomfort to the horse.

If we have to come to the conclusion that we cannot ride a horse in an ordinary bit with sufficient comfort or safety, it would be better to sell him and buy one we can manage rather than tax our ingenuity in bitting devices, all of which end in the same result. Some horses, heavier and bigger and longer striding than others, naturally require a little more leverage, and, consequently, a slightly longer cheekpiece; but that is all. The horse takes the pressure of the bit on the root of the tongue, and the object of a high port is not, as is often supposed, to create a leverage on the roof of the mouth, but to make it more difficult for the horse to press his tongue against it. But has it ever produced the result we want? Some people are very much concerned at a horse putting his tongue over the bit, and have all sorts of devices, like gridirons, to overcome the habit. Personally, I have never been able to understand why. I have ridden many horses with this trick, and unless I look, I am unable to tell whether the tongue is over the bit or not. Left alone, he will put it back again when he feels so inclined, and I think we should be satisfied with that.

The fact is, that we can seldom cure horses of habits due to temperament or formation. If a horse gallops with his head low, does a gag succeed in raising it? If he carries it high, will a snaffle bring it down? The best answer to both these problems is to leave the horse alone as much as possible and allow nature to work in its own way. A horse is often fighting against the bit when he carries his head low, and he is more likely to raise it when he finds freedom. Similarly, the high carriage is often due to bad handling and not to other causes.

I think most people agree that the best bit is the simple double bridle, and if it has a sliding mouthpiece, like the "Ward-union,"

so much the better. Let us, therefore, stick to that; and if we have trouble with our horses, let us blame ourselves and our own horsemanship. We must remember that they went well enough when we bought them, and that the faults which are so troublesome now were not so apparent then. It therefore stands to reason it is not the bit that is doing the harm; it must be some fault in ourselves or our stable management. Too little exercise and too much feeding are common reasons that can be easily rectified. But after we have put that matter right and we find we still cannot hold our horse, what is to be done then? The answer is, let the horse have freedom. Let him gallop on to the next gate with only a firm control on the reins, but with a strong grip with the leg. Then, when we want him to stop, let us say so both firmly and forcibly if need be; and, unless the horse is insane (and I have never come across one), he will obey. Horses often do not stop, because they do not know they are intended to stop. If a dull pull is on his mouth all the time, how can he know?

The practice of hunting in snaffles is hardly to be recommended, and it is very mysterious why so many people do, as it is much more tiring and unsatisfactory. Some horses are described as "snaffle mouthed." But have we any idea what this means? Have we ever come across a horse that does not bridle more readily or one that could not be ridden in a double bridle? The snaffle is useful for grooms at exercise or for jockeys when at work, but those would seem to be the only occasions when it should be used, except, of course, with novices and children.

There are three kinds of martingales in common use—the running, standing and Irish—and they have certain objects in common. Their object is to give greater control, to keep a horse's head down, and to prevent the rider getting a bang on the nose. The running martingale is sometimes placed on the snaffle rein, sometimes on the curb. Everyone seems to have different ideas as to which is right. So it may not be without interest if we examine this subject. Let us make this postulate, first of all, because it gives us a common factor to work upon and a text to refer to:

"The martingale has as its object restraint for the abnormal and freedom for the normal." So when a horse's head is in its natural position it should not be operating, but when he throws his head about, its restraining influence should be immediately felt. That being so, I do not think there can be any question as to which is the right rein on which to place the running martingale. Normally we use the snaffle rein more than the curb, and therefore that rein should be free to play upon the horse's mouth, and delicacy of touch should not be hampered by the continuous drag of the martingale rings. Secondly, as its object is to restrain the abnormal, it is just as well that when the horse does throw his head up he should have as strong a check as possible. This is undoubtedly more effectively accomplished when the martingale is on the bit.

But does this form of martingale really perform its functions? It does not prevent the horse from raising his head as high as he likes and from banging us on the nose when we are off our guard. It certainly keeps one rein in its place, but it does not prevent the other from flying over his head on occasions. It does not help us to keep our own hands down, because when it is properly fitted the rings should be as high as the top of the withers. In gateways it occasionally gets caught up, and, when falling, a horse sometimes puts his foot through it and breaks it to bits. Are not, therefore, its advantages rather more apparent than real?

The Irish martingale keeps the reins in place, but otherwise gives complete freedom, and for this reason is a much better device for steeplechasing than, perhaps, any other. It is light and does not interfere in any way with the play of the reins, and, out hunting, does not get in the way when opening gates or when falling, and it is, therefore, better for this purpose than the running one. But it does not prevent a horse from throwing his head as high as he likes, and for this reason for all-round work the standing martingale is surely preferable to all others. It is not in such general use as it should be, because many people suppose it "restrains the normal" when a horse is jumping, and might even cause him to fall. Those of us who have ridden over any kind of fence in stand-

ing martingales know that such is not the case, but it is as well to examine this contention. A horse, when jumping naturally, with a free head, keeps it almost still. At the moment of throw off, the nose is advanced in proportion to the effort, and it is for this reason, and for this reason alone, that we should always have our martingales fairly long. But after the hind legs have left the ground, the horse begins to look where he is going. As he lands his head is down, and if he falls his head is also down. So that the standing martingale does not affect the horse on landing in any way. It is a curious thing, but although we sometimes break running martingales in a fall, it is rare indeed to break a standing one. Once we have assured ourselves on these points, the advantages of it are apparent, because it does perform its functions. It does prevent a horse throwing his head too high; it does not prevent our having our reins quite free to play upon his mouth; and it seldom catches in a gateway or gets tied up when the horse is down. It gives complete freedom for the normal and is less cumbersome than the running martingale, which has, indeed, but little to recommend it.

Note.—"The standing martingale . . . is the only one I would recommend."—Fielis.

X

LEGS

When age hath weakened manhood's powers,
And every nerve unbraced,
Those scenes of joy will still be ours
On memory's tablets placed.

IT is a very odd thing that even experienced riders will lead anyone who asks to suppose that there may be hope of people with flat thighs becoming horsemen, but that if they should happen to have round thighs, they had better take up croquet or ping-pong, because their case would be beyond cure.

This idea is so prevalent we come across it over and over again. Even in the latest instructions in a well-known training manual we find the following mystifying statement: "A man with a short thick thigh requires his stirrups shorter [or longer, I forget which] in proportion, than does a man of equal height with a flat thigh and thin leg," and with that it hastily, and wisely, passes on to another subject.

A statement such as this may do well enough for those who have not a too enquiring mind, but it will not stand an even cursory examination, for we only have to ask what is meant by a round thigh to find upon what slender foundations these beliefs have been framed. The usual reply is for the instructor to bend his knee, put his weight upon that leg and slap what is then the inside portion of his thigh and say: "There's a flat thigh for you!"

The curious point of all this is that even supposing the shape of people's muscles varied to such a great extent in this part of their anatomy, it has nothing whatever to do with the seat in the saddle. Let us just think for one moment. This so-called flat portion is on *top* when we sit in the saddle. It has nothing to do with our connection with it whatever. The only portions of our legs that

are in contact with the saddle are what are called the buttocks. These are the *back* parts of the thighs and are always round.

The origin of this quaint notion arises from the somewhat less attractive appearance a man with short strong thighs has compared with one with long thighs, however weak they may be. His stout legs have the appearance of roundness, and should he fall off on any occasion it is common to hear it said, "Oh, well, what can you expect? He has such round thighs."

And yet the owner of short thighs, provided they are strong ones, has a firmer seat than the tall man with long thin legs, a fact I have often observed with recruits. Of course, the shape or strength of the thigh has nothing whatever to do with the length of the stirrup leather, as I hope those who have read the chapter on the length of the stirrup will admit.

I am inclined to think that short thighs are even better for riding than long ones, for the following reason: When we want to crack nuts, the closer we put them to the apex of the nutcracker the stronger pressure we get, and I submit for consideration whether, other things being equal, the shorter thighs would not produce greater pressure of the knees on to the saddle.

In my own experience I have always noticed that the tall, long-legged rider has nothing like so strong a seat as the short, thick-set man.

It would be an interesting and easy experiment to make, if a spring with a registering dial were made, so that a man could test the strength of his grip by holding it between his knees. The short-legged man would, I am confident, prove the superior of the long-legged one.

There is one more point. It is often said that owing to the extreme muscular development of many "round"-thighed men they find it hard, if not impossible, to get their knees on to the saddle flaps, and so experience difficulties more loosely knit men do not. The reply to this is that none of us, whatever make or shape he may have, does get the inside of his knees close to the flaps of the saddle at the walk or standstill without effort. Generally speaking,

BALANCE IS BETTER THAN GRIP.

they are not even in close contact, and sometimes actually daylight is shown. But this is of no consequence. In fact, it is right that it should be so, because under these circumstances we all should be as free and unconstrained as possible. Directly we put our weight on to our stirrup irons, however, and take it away from the saddle (as when rising at the trot, for example), it does not matter how we are shaped, fat or thin, long or short, we shall find there is no difficulty in getting our knees to hold firmly to the saddle. In fact, we must; we have little option. This is not a matter, therefore, for concern by either pupil or instructor, whose assiduities can be better directed to the solution of more important problems.

The next question is that of the angle of the foot. In the cavalry the men used to be taught to keep their toes in, and this fact has often misled people who have not understood the reason. It is nothing to do with equitation *per se*, but is due to the fact that when riding in the ranks, unless the feet are so placed, there is the likelihood of their catching in the stirrup of the man next and so causing discomfort, if nothing worse. But for civilian riding the angle of the foot is one for nature alone to decide.

If a man has knock-knees, his feet will be inclined to turn outwards. If he has bow-legs, they will have a tendency to turn inwards. No instructor of equitation, however efficient, can alter the shape of his pupil's legs, after all is said and done. Our legs may be "pulled," perhaps, but reformed—never! The angle of the foot, therefore, in a horizontal plane is not a matter to worry about, but vertically it is of great importance. The smallest tendency to turn the toe downwards must be checked at once. Unless the toe is raised, the muscles of the inside of the calf are relaxed, and a firm grip is impossible. The action also has a tendency to raise the heel and so take weight off the stirrups. So it is a "double fault" which puts a rider "out of court" at once.

This brings us to the question of grip. It is not so long ago when horsemanship was supposed to be largely a question of strength. When we used to lean our bodies back over our fences, much more strength, certainly, was required, but its importance

was overrated. In order to increase the muscular development of the fork, most pupils had to ride bareback or on numnahs, or stripped saddles, and many, many moments of useless discomfort have been suffered thereby. It was done for two supposed reasons. The first was, of course, for strengthening the grip, but the second was much more subtle. It was to get the pupil "down in his saddle," whatever that might mean. How that result was to be accomplished by this "grip" scheme no one could explain satisfactorily.

The fact is that the rider who looks uncomfortable in the saddle and who is not "down" in his seat is one whose muscles are not relaxed; one who is anxious and who is, in fact, gripping. Consequently, the way to get a good seat is not to grip, but the very converse; to be free and supple and confident and happy, and then no one will say you are not "sitting down."

Many people have heard remarks like the following: "He is a fine strong rider." "He has a horse between his legs like a vice." "He can squeeze a horse so tight he can make it groan under him." I do not think such ideas are prevalent to-day, but I do believe that they are not wholly eradicated.

We must have strength and plenty of it for emergencies, and for steadying and controlling a keen horse, but in the ordinary course of riding we need exercise nothing but the gentle pressure which can be maintained hour after hour. Those riders who find themselves exhausted under normal conditions are unnecessarily exercising their muscles to the inconvenience of both themselves and their horses. The steeplechase rider who comes in as blown as his horse (unless he has had a hard finish or a difficult ride) should be noted by punters and his mounts avoided.

We must remember our muscles are to help our balance, not to direct it. If we are properly placed we do not require to grip under normal circumstances, but we do want all our muscles on occasion (as in refusing, pulling, shying, etc.). I once remember hacking with a friend whose horse was very fidgety, and he complained how it tired him, because he had to grip so hard. I recommended him

not to do it so much, and the moment he gave it up the horse went quite quietly. Many horses fret with the pressure of the leg always on them, and this was an instance of that kind. My friend was much surprised at the advice he had received, because he had been brought up on old ideas, and thought that to ride well was to grip well.

But as riding undoubtedly does require plenty of strength, it is curious that the fashion of the day is to display as little calf as possible. What is called a good leg for a boot is a spindle shank, which is a thoroughly bad one for riding. We do require calves in equitation, and it is surprising that so much pains should be taken to make them look almost unnaturally small. The better the development of the calf the better for riding, so let our stout-legged friends take heart. They can comfort themselves with the fact that if their lower extremities are not quite so elegant as some, they are more efficacious. What is good for the "horsy" man is not necessarily good for the horseman.

It is on account of this prevalent idea of grip that pupils are so often taught riding by having their stirrups taken away. This, without doubt, does get them to use the riding muscles, but similar results can be obtained in a much easier way, by teaching the use of the leg in the half passage, shoulder in, reining back, and so on.

These exercises use the leg muscles as much as is necessary, without causing discomfort or loss of confidence.

It is very important to encourage the pupil, and make him enjoy his lessons, but this cannot be done by asking him to perform feats the instructor himself would be very sorry to do.

XI

CAN LADIES RIDE ASTRIDE?

Deprive him of horses and hounds as you will,
A fox-hunter once is a fox-hunter still.

BEFORE the above question should be answered, it would be advisable for us to look into the various reasons which are given against ladies' capacity to ride in men's saddles, to examine them, and to see how far those who hold these ideas have experience to guide them, or reasons to give for opinions often boldly and unequivocally expressed.

Perhaps the most frequent argument used is that, whereas men have usually flat thighs to grip with, the gentler sex, more often than not, have round ones. This so-called fact, which is generally accepted without question, seems to be sufficient to prove that to men alone is given the power to ride a horse astride, and that ladies, in their emulation, are foolishly flying in the face of Providence.

Somehow, this does not seem convincing; we listen with polite attention, but reserve our judgment. Those who have read the last chapter, however, know what value can be placed on this question of round or flat thighs. They know that the only portion that touches the saddle is the back part, and that the flat portion of the thigh is uppermost. The so-called round-thighed individual does not exist. The muscles of all thighs are flat when the leg is bent and the sinews tightened. The only difference is that some are thinner than others, and some better conditioned. This argument, therefore, of the round and flat thigh evaporates at once under the first rays of examination. So, let us turn to the next point.

It is said that females have knock-knees, and, therefore, have more difficulty in riding astride than men. This argument presupposes, firstly, that the statement is true, and secondly, if true, that it affects riding. Far be it from me to express any opinion upon so delicate a subject, but such statements should also be

accepted with a discreet reserve. Be it correct or not, the point that really matters is, does it affect riding?

We know that the knock-kneed man, when in the saddle, turns his toes out, and the bow-legged man turns them in; but what of it? Does it really affect his horsemanship? Is our knock-kneed brother unable to ride? If he can do so, and enjoy himself across country, why not our knock-kneed sister? I fear the argument is more imposing than important, more specious than sound. It is another which, under examination and experiment, soon collapses.

The third argument, which is better than those we have now dismissed, has, at least, the merit of fact to support it, and it will, therefore, take a little more space to dissect and care to analyse. It is that, as woman is of the weaker sex, she cannot have so strong a grip on a horse as a man, and that she is thereby faced with greater difficulties in her equitation.

This argument might have something in it were horsemanship a matter of sheer strength, or if it were a case of breaking in wild horses to dangerous feats. But, speaking generally, we do nothing of the sort when out riding. The lady's hunter in particular is a quiet, well-mannered animal, which does not pull much and goes quietly and nicely wherever wanted. On such occasions we do not have to use much muscular effort. In fact, the riding of such as these hardly exercises us sufficiently. So, why should not ladies ride quiet horses astride perfectly well? "Because of jumping," is the immediate reply, "for there they do require strength, and plenty of it. Ladies would soon find themselves in Queer Street if they started negotiating fences astride similarly to men."

If this is the reply, then we can only suppose that men remain with their horses while jumping by great muscular effort, and it speaks very badly for the horsemanship of these bulldog males, who supply by strength what they must lack in skill. The fact is, that, if we are properly poised in our saddles and our horses are jumping kindly and freely, we do not require much grip in jumping. It is, as we know, a question of balance.

Of course, out hunting, we cannot always be right, and then a

certain amount of strength is undoubtedly necessary; but it should certainly not be beyond the capacity of any active woman. But if ladies could only be taught the principles of the balanced seat, they would have little difficulty in riding astride across country and in competing on equal terms with men; but as it is, many who do come out hunting astride positively dare not jump anything at all, and so lose much of the pleasure of the day's sport.

There is a system of instruction for jumping which is equally good for either old or young, for the most timid as well as for the beginner or the experienced rider, whereby, in a very few lessons, the principles of this art can be easily understood and soon mastered. But, I am sorry to say, I know no riding school where any real system of such a nature has been adopted.

I am confident that much can be done, and very easily, too, in helping ladies to ride on plain saddles just as effectively as men. If we think the matter over without prejudice, we shall, I feel sure, come to the conclusion that there is no sound reason why ladies cannot ride perfectly well astride, as long as we do not expect them to ride steeplechases and other dangerous and strenuous exercises. Also, I am confident that they could jump in the show-ring as well as men. Many of us have seen women riding buck-jumpers in such an efficient way in the Rodeo Exhibition as to prove that they can be every bit as good as men in the saddle, if only they are allowed to try.

At the Dublin Horse Show, and indeed in most places now, ladies riding astride in the jumping competitions has become quite a feature.

But the difficulty of riding this course is much less than those found in this country.

The bank is, after all, a comparatively easy obstacle to negotiate, and cannot be compared with a gate at 4 feet 6 inches to 5 feet in height.

But they do get the Dublin course with very great success, and from that it is only another step—which, in fact, they have already made—to the greater difficulties of upright fences where the slightest touch is disaster.

As it is, they take on the wall in the Dublin course without any trouble, and from that to other more difficult obstacles is a mere flea-bite.

It seems to me that ladies possess naturally the qualities of horsemanship more than men. They pick up anything that is delicate and precise so easily. The grasp of rhythm and cadence and balance seems to come naturally to them. How well ladies dance and skate!—and I want no better pupil for riding than one who is a good skater. But anyone who understands the principles of balance, whether learnt in the gymnasium, the ballroom, or the rink, has already gone far in the art of horsemanship. Then, again, the delicacy of touch and the sympathy which is a necessity for good "hands" are both feminine attributes. If, therefore, we are sure we can eliminate physical disability, then ladies have the argument entirely in their favour.

That the physical argument is not a sound one I hope has been demonstrated satisfactorily, and, if that is the case, then I trust ladies will take courage. Let them go to good tailors and good riding instructors, and then they will be able to show the men the way a stiff country should be crossed both attractively and efficiently.

XII

STABLE MANAGEMENT

The last red rose on the arch has faded,
The border has mourned for its last white flower
The dahlias drop where the frost has raided,
The grass is wet with the autumn shower.
Dull are the paths with their leaf-strewn gravel,
Cold is the wind as it wanders by;
Still there's a path that a man can travel
Happy at heart, though the roses die.

THIS is a title I hesitate to use, because many people will not read a line further, and quite right too. There has been so much written on this subject that anything further might be regarded, with justification, as superfluous. I feel sure the hunting man will not read it, and yet, somehow, I hope he may, because I am not going to talk on the old dry-as-dust subjects. I am not going to explain the difference between seeds and meadow hay, or to write that the seat of curb is not in the jaw. I want to talk of the humanities of management rather than its rules. To dissect our habits, not to add to them. To analyse rather than synthesise.

We are too often slaves to habit. Repetition is mistaken for verity, and stable jargon for sophistry. "I have said it three times, and therefore it is true" is more accurate than we like to admit. It is, therefore, our object to look into some of these time-worn formulæ of stable management to see whether they are not over-mellowed for modern consumption and too stale for even custom to digest any longer.

"If a horse has colic, he must be walked about." Perhaps of all rules this is the most generally accepted. It is ingrained into the soul of every groom, and it is impressed with persistence on to every student. I remember once, when I was orderly officer going the rounds at night, I found one of the night guards very busy in a stall. I asked him what he was doing. "Oh," he replied, "these

horses will keep lying down, and I have had such a time keeping them on their legs!" He had obviously had the "colic" rule well rubbed into him and had got it a bit mixed up.

Now, why have we got this rule? If we have pains in our centre-pieces, we do not want to walk about, we go and lie down. So why should not a horse do the same? The reply that is usually given to this enquiry is either that a horse may twist himself internally if he lies down, or that he might get cast in the box or stall and hurt himself. If these are the only reasons, and I have never heard any others, they are rather weak for so painful a precaution. The chances of a horse twisting himself when lying down are no greater than if he is standing up, and those of injury from getting cast, when under supervision, are slight. It does, however, exist, and so, to be absolutely safe, the best plan is to lead the horse to the paddock or straw yard and let him lie down there as much as he likes. We are never wrong if, when in doubt, we treat horses as we would treat ourselves.

Another point to remember is that nearly all sprains occur when a horse is tired. No sound horse has ever broken himself down at the first fence of a steeplechase. It is the last one that is the dangerous one, when he is fatigued or blown. The ligaments go when flexion becomes difficult, and it is then we must look out for trouble. Consequently, hunting people who want to keep their horses sound (and who do not?) should bear this simple rule in mind: "Never ride a tired horse, and you will seldom sprain a sinew." If this rule were observed in the hunting field, I fear it would spell ruin to our good friends the veterinary surgeons, whose activities would be more than halved. Fortunately for them, such is not the case. So many people will stop out till the last (especially if they are on hirelings, of course) and bring their horses back in a really tired, if not exhausted, condition. This is bad policy from whatever standpoint we look at it. The tired horse will not come again so soon, and we actually will get much less riding out of a horse so treated than with one which with short hours will take his turn regularly. What we should try to remember is that six hours

under the saddle is quite enough for any horse, however steady the day's hunting has been. If he has left his stable at 10 a.m., we should try to see he is back in his stable at 4 p.m. If we do that, we shall find we shall get two days a week regularly from him. But each hour over that should put him back a whole day. Thus, supposing we are able to hunt a horse on Mondays and Thursdays, and on a certain Thursday we kept him out for seven hours. He then would probably not be ready for his next day's hunting till the following Tuesday. If we had him out eight hours, then the following Wednesday. While if he was out nine hours, he would not be fit to hunt again for a whole week. Every hour, therefore, you ride a horse after he has had enough is a sheer loss in whatever way we look at it. However, horses are expected to come home exhausted, if we can judge from the preparations that are made by our grooms for their arrival. It is the invariable custom to have gruel prepared and ready for them, to be followed by a linseed mash. All this is very necessary if the animal is really exhausted; but if he is not, is he still to be treated as an invalid?

Let us think of it in this way. Supposing we have just returned home after an extremely exhausting day, we find our appetite has left us. All we want is, perhaps, a cup of tea and bed. But if we have got back after only some reasonable and invigorating exercise, what we want is a jolly good dinner. We should be pretty mad if we were presented with a little bread and milk, a mild purgative and sent straight upstairs! But we are no different in this respect from the horse. When he comes back after a reasonable day's hunting cool and contented, he is jolly hungry, and wants a bucket of good cold water and an extra feed of corn, and, speaking personally, I always saw that my horses got it.

We want to run our stables by reason and not rule, and once we start to think we shall find many little things like this that demand our attention.

Another point it would be well for us to remember is that the horse is gregarious by nature and dislikes solitude. And yet how many loose-boxes are merely horse prisons! The horse, too, tied

to a blank wall in a stall has no opportunity of seeing the world or understanding what is going on around him, but still we are surprised when horses shy! It is often said that wind sucking is a habit started by sheer boredom. If only we would build our stables so that horses can look out all day long at the things going on in the stable yard, and can see (and perhaps communicate with) each other, we shall seldom have timid horses to ride; they will "do" better and be more credit to us in many ways than if we treat them like discarded wheelbarrows, only to be put into a shed until they are wanted again. Leave the top half of the stable doors open and you will find that every horse, except at meal time,

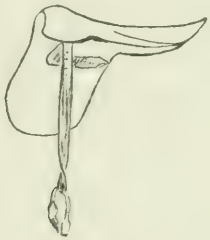


Fig. 19.—The Twisted Leather.

will have his head sticking out. Nevertheless, how often we see the stud groom come along and close them all up lest the horses' coats might stare a bit with the cold. He likes to keep the stables overwarm, so that when we come round and he turns back the rugs for us to look at his horses we will speak in praise of glossy coats and splendid grooming. It is all so transparent to those who wish to look into things, and it is such a pity the owners themselves so often are misled by the guile or ignorance of their grooms.

The next point I want to mention is hardly stable management, but it is difficult to find a better heading under which to include lines too brief for a chapter to themselves.

It is of great help to all out hunting if they will only see that their stirrup leathers are twisted before mounting. This allows the iron to hang at right angles to the horse's sides, ready for the foot to go in, and obviates the difficulty that is otherwise experienced when the stirrup is lost (as it is by all of us sometimes) in replacing it on the foot. It sometimes saves a fall, and it is always a most useful assistance in times of emergency.

The rule is this: When the stirrup iron is hanging naturally, take hold of the leather with one hand just above the iron, and give the iron a sharp twist backwards and outwards with the other.

But, curiously enough, this simple plan is most difficult to enforce. Grooms simply will not do it, and, as often as not, when they do do it, do it with the twist the wrong way. However, with perseverance, the practice can be instilled, and it is really well worth the trouble.

There is one more universally accepted principle which will not stand the strain of examination.

Tails are always pulled. But why is this? It is sometimes very troublesome to do. It is very painful to some thin-skinned horses, and causes kicking, or makes them fidgety.

The reason for the adoption of pulling is because scissors, in unskilful hands, can make a tail very unsightly.

But this result is only produced if the hairs are cut at the ends, like our own at a barber's. But, if properly cut off at the roots, there is nothing in any way objectionable.

Let us consider for a moment what happens when a hair is pulled. The root of a hair is composed of a bulb and a capsule. When the hair is pulled, all that happens is, the bulb is extracted from the capsule and the real root remains. In due time the hair sprouts up again, just exactly in the same way as if it had been cut off by the scissors.

Therefore nothing whatever is gained by pulling.

The best way to trim a tail is to use the scissors, and cut the hairs just underneath the dock for about two inches from the top. Care should be taken not to cut too far down, because the hairs are

much longer than is generally supposed, and a thinning of the end of the tail may be caused.

When the hairs start to grow again they can be cut again. It is very easy when the principle is understood, much easier, in fact, than pulling, and causes the horse no discomfort.

The hairs on the top of the tail should never be touched, except with the dandy brush.

This is the easiest way to have nice tails, without which even the best looking horses can be spoilt in appearance.

XIII

MASTERY

My song is of the horseman—the centaur of all time,
Who stole for us the freedom of colts of every clime,
Who won the spurs of mastery, who held the reins of pride,
Who left the world a heritage of sons to rule and ride.

A LITTLE while ago a man was prosecuted for knocking a horse about in Richmond Park. He had been trying to get him to jump a bench seat and had failed. On being asked why he had treated his horse in this way, he replied that "he had to show he was master." This answer displayed great want of understanding of horses and how to treat them, for mastery is not a matter of either strength or punishment, but of knowledge, patience, tact and perseverance. These are the attributes of the horse-master. He brings out all the tractable qualities by gentle but persistent methods, and leaves violent measures to those whose inexperience has yet to discover their folly. There is no difficulty in getting a horse to jump a bench seat in a park, or any other obstacle, with or without wings, provided we do it the right way. But almost every horse, no matter how highly trained, would refuse such an obstacle if he were suddenly put at it without previous experience, especially if he had not been jumping for some time.

Because we cannot get a horse to jump, even though we put him at it again and again, it does not mean that he is our master; it means that we are not tackling the matter properly. If we find him refusing, it is *not* derogatory to give up the task; we do not lower ourselves in the horse's estimation by going away, and we do not perpetuate the habit by so doing. These are mistaken ideas which have done a great deal of harm to horse-training. The statement we hear so often, that we must always prove ourselves master, is much misunderstood and misused. Master we can easily be. No animal is more ready to admit it than the horse; but we must, as in other matters, tackle it scientifically.

PLATE XIX.

IF A HORSE REFUSES WITH YOU, BLAME YOURSELF FIRST.

We must understand his psychology, and turn those mysteries of mind to work with, instead of against, our wishes.

The first is that of timidity—the "shying" quality.

The second, that of observation—suspicion of novelty.

The third, the law of self-preservation—fear of falling, or of getting bogged or ditched.

The fourth, obedience to habit, or the acceptance of the normal.

The fifth, repugnance to pain or discomfort.

The sixth, the homing instinct, or the desire for stable and food.

These are the qualities which have to be considered if we wish to be horse-masters; and if we do, we shall find much less difficulty in our training.

I have before me, as I write, the picture of a horse being jumped over a chair, without wings, in an open field. Both he and his rider are perfectly happy, and enjoying themselves hugely. This is horse-mastery; but how is it attained? Not by whip and spur, but by patience and perseverance.

Let us reconsider our Richmond Park rider and see what he was doing. Firstly, the object was probably somewhat strange. The horse had a natural aversion to the unknown, and the shying quality was brought out. Secondly, as it had no wings, the law of self-preservation suggested an easier way. Thirdly, the horse had, possibly, not been jumping for some time—at any rate, certainly not over that place—and the law of habit worked against the task. It is not suggested that the horse had sore shins, or corns; but, if he had, that, too, would affect his decision against making the leap. But it is also possible that the rider was jumping away from home, in which case the homing instinct would be affected. Finally, it is quite likely that the horse had not, in the first instance, understood that he had been wanted to jump over so unexpected an obstacle in so unusual a place.

Hence the refusal. The rider, full of ignorance and pride, describes these refusals as direct disobedience, for which punishment must be inflicted. And by this punishment he is doing the very

thing that does produce habitual refusal. What he should have done was to have given up trying on that occasion, and awaited a better opportunity later on.

An immense amount of harm has been caused by this false idea of mastery. "I won't be beaten, so the horse must be," is a spectacle to be seen very frequently, as the inexperienced rider shoves his half-trained horse at some small obstacle in the hunting field. He does not realise that it is not the size of the fence that is troubling the horse, but the bewilderment of ideas which are passing through the animal's brain.

Most horses like jumping, and the little joyful buck they sometimes give after landing is suggestive of enjoyment and *joie de vivre*, while no properly trained horse will persistently refuse. But leave off jumping for a few months, and we shall find him quite likely to do so for a little, until he has got back to the old habits. But the horse-master does not hit him for that reason. He just calls him a "silly old ass," and puts him at something easier. In five minutes that horse is hopping over the fences as well as ever, and both horse and rider are the best of friends.

This is mastery. Tact does as much in the training of horses as in even the management of men. Fatigue is not a cause of refusal. No one has ever seen a refusal at the last fence of a steeplechase, but there have been many at the first one. A horse does not refuse because he is tired, but because he is too fresh. That might have been another reason for our park friend's incident. His horse may even have been quite accustomed to jumping benches in the park, but "Monday morning" refusals are very common. A good gallop would soon have put that little matter right, and he would then have proclaimed his "mastery" in a very different way.

We must remember a horse can beat us in strength and in obstinacy, and woe to the rider who attempts to proclaim his superiority in either of those qualities. We have no "mastery" there. We are as inferior in those matters as we are superior in other branches of knowledge. So, to be masters of our horses, we must be masters of ourselves.

Patience and moderation, good humour and self-control are the attributes of horse-mastery, and if we do not possess or get possessed of those virtues, we must give up hope of attaining any success.

The rule is, after all is said and done, a very simple one : " Whenever difficulty is experienced, simplify the task," or, in the appropriate phraseology of the French, " Reculer pour mieux sauter."

XIV

VICE

For never man had friend
More enduring to the end,
Truer mate in every turn of time and tide.

WHEN we talk of vice in horses, to what do we refer? What are our experiences which lead us to use so strong a term? Can we honestly say that we have any justification for this expression? Possibly those who have lived abroad and know the habits of the country-bred may be able to produce instances, but, speaking generally, I think all will admit, when they think the matter over, that they have never come across real vice in any horse. By real vice I mean inherent vice—vice which has been born in the foal and which cannot be cured or eradicated by gentle treatment.

Most of the so-called vicious incidents that have come to my knowledge have been produced by incorrect handling. A horse will start kicking if the rider is inadvertently tickling him with the spur, another will commence to jib because the rider is too nervous, or to refuse because he is being badly ridden. Another will show temper in the stable on account of bad grooming and so on. We have all experience of "temper," but if we try to understand the reasons for this we shall nearly always find it is due, not to the horse, but to his treatment.

Fortunately horses have a better chance in this country than in the Colonies, and for that reason we find them more amenable. For instance, buck-jumping is practically unknown here, but out in the prairies it is quite common—so much so, that it has become an everyday occurrence over there. This is almost entirely due to the rough treatment horses experience in their breaking, and is not due to inherent vice. I am prepared to wager a large sum that were we to transpose our methods of handling young horses, we should have the home of buck-jumping in this country and it would die out completely over the water.

There is another very common "vice." It is called "running away." All horsemen know that this is usually due to bad horsemanship. In fact, wherever the habit has been formed it is always due to a continuance of bad riding. The horse does not *want* to gallop, as hard as possible, along the macadam road, or to go "all out" round and round a field. He does so because, first of all, he is an animal of good courage and vitality; secondly, because he has no knowledge of what is required of him. All he is aware of is a very heavy hand tugging at his mouth. He receives no "aids" or anything to tell him of the rider's wishes, and the pain he is suffering affects his powers of reasoning and of thought. If he were "vicious" he would soon "remove" his rider, but being, as all horses are, docile by nature, and wonderfully patient and long-suffering, he bears the discomfort without ill-will, and just gallops on, because he really does not know what else to do. With speed the blood surges to his head, his reasoning powers leave him, and bewildered beyond his mental capacity, he may charge into some obstacle which causes a serious accident. But the poor animal has shown no "vice" and the blame should rest entirely upon the rider or the training he has had.

Horses that have been steeplechased naturally learn to "pull," because that is the way they have been taught. So if we take them out hunting and find them hard to stop, it is no vice. It is very much the reverse, in fact. They are doing what they think is expected of them. It is up to us as riders to re-train them, and not to blame them.

In the old days, if one wanted to pick out a good troop horse, it was always a certainty to ask the troop sergeant to show you the worst horse in the stable. I have no doubt things are much better now, but in those days a horse with courage soon became the "nasty vicious brute," and thin-skinned horses were always "devils to groom."

Whatever happened, they always blamed the horse and accused him, when anything displeasing occurred, with being an "asterisk," "dash," "asterisk" son of an "asterisk" progenitor. When cast-

ing parades came on there were always quite a bunch of horses up to be cast for "vice," and very many stories could be told of the wonderful successes that subsequent owners have had with these so-called "incurably vicious" horses.

In the old cavalry training manual, "vice" was put down in a prominent position in the chapter on Training Horses, but I am pleased to be able to record that I was instrumental in having that objectionable word removed. To speak of vice in a horse is to argue against your own knowledge and experience. The horse is so gentle by nature, so docile by disposition, so patient and forbearing, that vice must be something quite apart from his normal disposition.

When we see something that looks vicious, it is up to us to look for the reason. For instance, mares in June are "as fickle as a changeful dream," but if we regard them as vicious because they refuse, or kick, then we must proclaim ourselves supremely ignorant. I remember noticing one day a lady was riding a horse that started to kick a little. He was not kicking really, he was only "protesting" against a strap which had got in between his back and the saddle. She promptly gave him a jolly good belting, accused him of the most malicious motives. I explained as delicately as I could what had happened, but she said that it was no reason for his kicking, and gave him another "just to put him in his place." I wondered what she herself would have done had something fallen down her back, and whether she would not have taken steps to shake it out, and pretty quick too. But sometimes it is best to keep one's thoughts to oneself.

Rearing is another so-called vice, but it is usually started by bad riding or bad training. It is very easily put right with a little judicious handling. It sometimes occurs when a horse objects to leaving the stable yard, but if he is led out with a little encouragement, the trouble is soon over. If, on the other hand, we start to hit him, we may turn a "murmur" into a real fight, and an incident into a habit. Or it may occur because we are pressing on with the training too quickly. For instance, perhaps we are asking him to jump a fence too big for him, or one that he does not like because

it has a boggy take-off. The answer in such a case is to desist and not to force him. But these little "show ups" are too obviously not vice; it is absurd to designate them in that way. "For vice sometime's by action dignified," and once we understand the reason for the horse's temper we ourselves become more human, and we begin to overcome by tact what we regarded as incurable, only to find it on examination to be nothing more or less than a misunderstanding.

Temper is, of course, a different thing from vice. The former is only temporary, while the latter is, or is supposed to be, of a permanent nature. But it is difficult in discussing these matters to differentiate with any exactitude between the two phases. It is, however, possible to ruin a horse's temper, and once this has been accomplished, it is final. No amount of kindness will bring back what has been irredeemably lost. It may be instances such as these which give colour to the "vice" idea, but mercifully they are somewhat rare in this country. They would never occur at all did we all know and understand how a horse should be treated. Vice is the reiteration of temper, and for those mathematically inclined we can express it thus:

$$T^n = V.$$

But, however we chose to express it, let us eliminate the word from our vocabulary, and I feel sure that if we do so we shall have made a good step towards understanding the mentality, the thoughts and troubles of our good friend the horse.

I cannot conclude this chapter, however, without referring to one more point. It is in regard to the senseless and cruel practice of docking.

That it should have continued so long in this country is very surprising.

Some time ago the matter was threshed out in committee, but the "dockers" carried the day, although the arguments they produced appeared extremely weak to the casual reader.

The matter should not be allowed to rest here, and I hope the question will be brought up again.

But the matter is largely in the hands of the public. If we all decide never to buy a docked horse, the practice will stop at once, and that is probably quicker than passing Acts of Parliament.

So let us make up our minds at once, and become supporters of anti-docking principles by never having a docked horse in our stables in the future.

Horses are sometimes inclined to kick after they have been docked, especially if their tails are touched when still sore, and for this they are often accused of "vice."

One of the sights the American looks to when landing in England is to see these ridiculous tails, which cause considerable amusement.

Once in Russia a man took over some of his docked horses, and all the street boys ran after him laughing at the absurdity.

So let us realise that it is nothing more than a habit, for which there is little reason, and in which is no beauty.

If we would only think a little bit more of the feelings and thoughts of the animals under our care, we should soon reap a rich harvest in the response they would give us.

XV

DOCILITY

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
Than that which parts you from some being more blessed.
There may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
Than you in your shallow philosophy guessed.

EVERYONE knows the "horse is a docile animal," but it is not everyone who thinks about it. The thing is so obvious and commonplace we do not dwell upon it any more than we ponder over wet pavements after rain or any other established everyday fact. And yet, matters that are verbally admitted are often not mentally grasped, or, in other words, the subject, like so many things in this world, has not been viewed through every aspect and examined with care and detachment. As we all admit that the horse is docile, let us, for once in a way, pursue this apparently unproductive pathway of thought and see where it leads us.

The horse, in its docility, will do all kinds of things for us with extremely little effort on our part, provided we are going slow. He will walk and trot and stop and turn at our pleasure, and as often as we wish. It is only when we begin to arouse his excitement by speed or pain that we find any difficulty at all. Not only will he walk and trot, but he will do a variety of more complicated feats, such as passaging, reining back, jumping, changing his legs, and so on, which are well known to anyone who has done any riding-school work. But, in spite of this amazing tractability, we find that when we go hunting or playing polo we have horses that won't stop or won't walk or won't turn, horses that pull and yaw, and horses that jig and tire us dreadfully by their indocilities.

Now, why is this? Why does tractability suddenly become intractability? It seems odd, somehow, does it not? The answer often given is that it is speed or excitement which produces this result, and that under such conditions the horse's mentality gives way and

he is incapable of understanding what is required. This reply usually passes unchallenged, and the subject is dropped. But is it correct? We know ranching ponies when at speed are fully alive to and ready for the jerk of lassoo ; we know that horses while steeplechasing show much intelligence in negotiating the fences ; and we know that polo ponies can be brought to a high pitch of intelligent obedience when ridden well. Consequently, it is felt that, as we come to examine this statement, we find it is not quite so conclusive as we thought. Personally, I think that the question should be tackled in a somewhat different way.

I submit that docility and intelligence are constant factors, no matter what we are doing with a horse, provided—and here is the real crux of the matter—the horse *understands what is required of him* and he is free from anxiety. Young horses, of course, have to learn, and youthful spirits are often very trying ; but that is not the point. Once a horse really understands what is wanted and he has no apprehension of jabs on the mouth or irritation from the spur, he will do what we ask of him.

Horses will not stop, because they do not understand they are meant to stop ; horses will not walk, because they are fretting ; polo ponies will not turn, because they have either not been properly taught or because the rider has quite forgotten to give them the right "aid" or because their mouths are so sore they can think of little else. It is not the motion or the excitement that causes the apparent waywardness, but lack of training or faults in riding.

It may be interesting to my readers to know that it is perfectly possible to knock a polo ball about at a canter, turn and twist, and stop on any required spot and facing the desired way on any ordinarily schooled polo pony without a bridle at all. This is a very attractive experiment, and, of course, only applies to the slower paces, although I feel quite sure it could be done at speed after a little patient schooling. It is only a question of making the pony understand what is wanted. But it must never be forgotten that in our schooling we must endeavour to make our lessons as attractive as possible. A horse which has absolute confidence in his rider will,

PLATE XX.

ONCE A HORSE UNDERSTANDS, HE WILL GO ANYWHERE.

when an emergency arises, do his very best, and his best is worth more than a good deal; but if he is not quite confident, a refusal will be the probable reply.

Seydlitz, the well-known cavalry leader of the eighteenth century, was a noted trainer of horses, and he was riding with Frederick the Great one day across a bridge. In order to test his abilities Frederick suddenly said, "The enemy are pursuing you and there is a hostile squadron in front, what would you do?" Without a moment's hesitation Seydlitz jumped his horse over the parapet of the bridge into the water below. In due course he returned dripping from head to foot, saluted, and said, "Sire, that is what I would do." The bridge to this day bears the name of the "Seydlitz Brücke." The moral to be learnt from this tale is that that horse had implicit confidence in his rider, and obeyed without the slightest hesitation, because he never could have had a fall. But I would be prepared to wager a large sum that that horse would never do the feat again. Once having been let down supreme confidence would have been destroyed. Consequently, when we are training our horses, let us remember never intentionally to put them down, because they never forget.

The matter of jibbing and other so-called vices hardly come into this question, as they can so easily be overcome with quiet and confident handling. They are not the result of lack of docility on the horse's part so much as bad handling, bad riding, or bad stable management on the part of the owner.

I do not think it is necessary to go through a long course of riding school to achieve good results, nor is it necessary to spend much time in learning all the "aids." "Aids" vary with different schools, and it is of comparatively minor importance what particular "aid" is adopted as long as the horse understands. For instance, horses that have never been taught neck-reining will answer to that method of handling almost as readily as the schooled horse, although the actual "aids" of neck-reining are the exact converse of those used in the ordinary turn.

Once a horse understands that hunting is not a race meeting, he will shed his excitement, and when a horse realises that in a race he is

expected to win, he will usually try his best. When a horse knows he is expected to jump temperately, he will do so. But these lessons have sometimes to be rather protracted. The young, excitable horse takes long to steady, and the horse that will not walk, much patience to make him. But my thesis is, that if we want a comfortable, temperate, and safe ride, we must convey our wishes to our mount in the way that can best be understood.

In polo, it is to be feared, most players are thinking more of the game than of their pony; but, did they put riding first and polo second, I think they would improve their game far more than they realise. Many ponies for which high prices have been given, and which are splendidly trained, often become hard pullers in the hands of even first-class players. Such players, of course, are only thinking of the ball, and for the time being forget how to convey their wishes to their mount, with the unfortunate results they themselves know only too well. But the pony will do it all right once he understands what he is wanted to do. The docility is there all the time. The pony, indeed, is willing; it is up to us to do the rest. So we get back to the old motto, "Blame yourself before you blame your horse," and, once we understand that, we are already well on the road to understanding the thoughts in the horse's mind.

XVI

RIDING FOR YOUNG AND OLD

That every boy on holiday
And girl from lessons freed
Might see as much as grown-ups may
When foxes run at speed.

And there should be no jealous lads
Nor tearful lasses found;
For he'd have brushes, masks and pads
Sufficient to go round.

And he would choose a careful line,
Avoiding wire and walls,
That little folk of eight or nine
Should have but "comfy" falls.

IT is often said that few who have not ridden when young will ride well when grown up, and it is said, perhaps still more often, that middle-aged men are too old to begin. Curiously enough, neither of the statements is strictly accurate and, like so many other beliefs, they will not stand the light of examination or the results of actual experience.

Riding for Children

It is supposed that people who have ridden all their lives, from donkeys to ponies, from ponies to cobs, and from cobs to hunters, must necessarily ride better than those who only start to ride in adolescence or early manhood. This supposition must necessarily presuppose that the instruction has been throughout beneficial and sound, because it would obviously not lead to good results if the principles taught were faulty or negligible. Most instruction, however, as we see every day, does leave much to be desired. We see small children out with grooms everywhere. They are sitting all wrong, and are committing almost every enormity in equestrianism

unchecked and unnoticed. Their so-called lessons are only surrounding them with an intensive crop of errors they may never grow out of, and yet their parents fondly believe they are learning to ride!

In many cases they enjoy themselves hugely, and in so far we all love to see them having a happy time; but that is not the point. We must remember that although they may love their ride, they are not learning riding. I can well remember my own early days. What an intense and unbalancing excitement it was when I had a pony to ride, and we would be heartless indeed to do anything to deny youngsters the pleasures of the saddle. So I must at once make my point clear. Youthful riding, though usually a pleasure, is seldom an education.

I think all riding masters in cavalry regiments will agree with me when I say that we can always get on better with a young subaltern who has never ridden before than with one who has ridden "all his life." We have seen it so often. The more "experienced" recruit officer will for a month or so be better than the other, but by the time a year is out there is nothing to choose between them, except that it is often level money on the beginner. As this is a quite admitted fact, it shows very clearly that it is not necessary to ride young to ride well, and that riding muscles can be developed without commencing in the cradle.

The next point is that many people say that it is good for the nerve to ride young, because the early habituation must be so beneficial that it must necessarily give confidence for the rest of life. Unfortunately, this is not a matter that can be altogether accepted. We have two classes of children—the bold and the timid. In the one case it is an anxiety to the parents, and in the other to themselves. The bold ones may easily lose their nerve, and the timid may never find it.

I fear we all know cases of children who, keen enough to begin with, suddenly refuse to get into the saddle again because of some fright or fall they may have experienced. If, therefore, we want our children to ride, we must remember that it is not going to help them to be first-class horsemen in the future, and that there is a risk

PLATE XXI.

INSTRUCTION BY GROOMS LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

of " putting them off " riding altogether. It is a matter upon which too much care cannot be bestowed. Let them ride by all means, but try to see they do not get into bad habits, and avoid the possibility of accident or fright to the limit of precaution.

If the parents are not in a position to give them riding facilities, then they can console themselves with the thought that they will be none the worse horsemen for all that when they reach a later age.

Fig. 20.

Right. Toe down. Too short.

We seldom see children riding correctly.

Riding for the Old

There are a very great number of people who have never had an opportunity of riding until they have reached middle age. When at last, perhaps after many years on an office stool, they find themselves able to, they are put off by their friends. They are told that it is only by long and protracted study when young that any efficiency can be attained; that it is dangerous to make any attempt; that riding muscles will be sprained, collar bones broken; that their horses will run away with them and so on indefinitely—agony piled on agony, so that he is a bold man indeed who will still attempt this hazardous enterprise. If he is of a sufficiently obstinate nature he

may discount the advice he gets to its proper value, but he has still one more obstacle to overcome. No man likes to be laughed at, and all hate to look foolish. Without proper instruction he knows he will cut a ridiculous figure, and the mysteries of the hunting field are very alarming to a man of importance and position in his own particular walk of life. The result of all this is that he never rides at all.

It is a great pity, because instruction upon right lines can produce wonderful results very speedily, and without nerve-racking or muscle-breaking exercises. As a case in point, I once took a man in hand who was over fifty years of age and could not "ride for toffee." Within four days he was jumping fences and enjoying every minute of it. In other words, although it is possible to be too young to begin, it is never too late to learn.

As to hunting, it is not difficult to find friends who will put one right in regard to dress and the unwritten laws. In these days of attenuated fields, hunting wants all the support it can get, and if the gulf could be bridged between those that would like to and those that do, we should go far in keeping fox-catching alive.

Sometimes it strikes me that what is wanted is a book called "Why?" If people could be told the reasons for things, we would not see so many absurdities about. For instance, take a hunting crop. It has reasons for its make and shape and balance which once realised would make selection an easy matter. But we see many beginners with one that seems to have been purchased from the grocer, and "knuts" with some "doggy" notions which may be very clever but do not open gates. It is the same with spurs and, in fact, all articles of equipment. Once we know the reason why, we can never make an unpractical mistake.

If, therefore, we assure the beginner, no matter how late in life he may wish to start, that he can quite quickly ride well, and that he need never be wrongly turned out, so that no one will know he is a veritable tyro, I feel confident we shall attract many men to the saddle who have hitherto suppressed their natural inclinations in that direction. This would be to the advantage of hunting and of horse breeding, and of many things and people which go to make the English countryside the most attractive place on earth.

XVII

POINT-TO-POINTS, OR HUNT STEEPLECHASES?

A TOAST.

Here's to that bundle of sentient nerves, with the heart of a woman, and the eye of a gazelle, the courage of a gladiator, the docility of a slave, and the proud obedience of the soldier. Gentlemen—*The Horse.*

THERE are quite a large number of hunting people who are much opposed to the hunt steeplechase, and aver that if there must be a race meeting, it should be a really "sporting" one. They call for an unmade, perfectly natural course in order that the best man across a country should win rather than the best horse. We will give them every credit for their advocacy of sportsmanship as long as they, too, will admit that those who do not hold these views also have the best interests of sport at heart.

If their proposals were adopted, let us see what the result would be. In order to make it fair to all, it would have to be ruled that the course must be entirely unknown to all riders, as otherwise the local man would have an advantage over the others. This would mean that the course would have to be selected somewhere outside the district, and even then there would be some who might have ridden over that part before. In order to get over this difficulty every rider would have to sign a certificate that he had never jumped those fences previously. To do this he would have to look at them, and so would walk over the course, and the whole scheme falls to pieces. It would also debar from entry all those who had been keen enough to help in the selection of the course and in making the arrangements. So the first principle that it should be an unknown country must be dropped. It cannot survive the most cursory examination.

We must, therefore, select a course well known to some of the riders and unknown to others. And their contention is that it should be a perfectly natural one.

Some say that they certainly should not be allowed to walk the course beforehand. But if we wish to be fair, as, of course, we all do, we must not give an advantage to one or two riders over the others. "Sporting" is, after all, only another word for "fair," and so they must assuredly be allowed to do so. Consequently the idea resolves itself into the selection of an unprepared course which can have been studied by all the field beforehand. This quite knocks out all ideas of the rider with "an eye to a country" having the best chance, and it only means that everyone knows the course and the best way of reaching the winning post.

We must then consider the fences themselves. They are to be unmade and quite natural. The natural fence is often only jumpable in places. Frequently there is room for one horse only at a time. Here, there will be a big jump, there, a small one. If four riders reached a narrow place at the same moment, where only one at a time could get through, the rider (for no fault of his own) who went last would be quite 200 yards behind the competitor who was lucky enough to get through first, although he arrived at the obstacle almost simultaneously. As is well known to riders who have tried this kind of thing, the "jostle" at such places is not only a serious matter but often extremely hazardous.

We also know that the horse who jumps first has to make a much bigger effort than the horse who jumps the same place last. As each horse jumps the gap gets bigger and the fence smaller. We have often seen out hunting how a bold rider on a good horse will jump some remarkably big fence, but in doing so opens it up. By the time ten people have been over, the fence is so easy it would not be impossible for a marine parade bath chair, occupant, respirator, ear trumpet and all. Consequently the bold and dashing sportsman who leads the field cuts out the work, takes all the risks, breaks many of the rails, probably falls, and leaves the wiser competitor who has followed in his wake to sail in an easy winner. So this certainly would not lead to a "sporting" race. In fact, it would not be a race at all.

The next point is that a "point-to-point" or a straight course without flags is extremely unsatisfactory. I have had several ex-

PLATE XXII.

STRONG FENCES WHERE RIDERS HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM.

periences of this kind of "sporting" course. On one occasion the whole field lost their way. We pulled up and asked each other what to do next. In the end we formed up and started ourselves all over again!

The best man on the best horse often fails to win because he misses some badly placed flag, so if we do want fair results we must not only see that there are plenty of flags, but that they are well placed. These unprepared courses are therefore very unsatisfactory from the rider's point of view. They are even worse from the horse's standpoint. The unprepared fence is all right out hunting, when we have time to look and to select, but when racing it is very dangerous indeed.

I remember once when riding a course of this nature I galloped for an attractive-looking gap, only to find, when too late, that it was occasioned by a horse pond. That was at a meeting where the riders were given as little opportunity as possible of walking the course. A local competitor, who naturally knew of its existence, avoided the trap, and won easily. Another time I lost a valuable horse because a ditch had not been cleaned out. And so we could continue indefinitely with lists of disasters which have occurred to horses because the fences had not been properly attended to.

I think we can say without fear of contradiction that the best prepared course is the most popular with both rider and horse. Let us now look at it from the point of view of the spectators. Much of the interest of the day's sport is lost if nothing can be seen of the race between the start and the finish. The more that can be seen the more popular are the meetings, and that in itself is an important point. The straight course, "the point-to-point," is unbearable. The best ones are circular, and the race should pass the spectators, if possible, more than once. If the country is flat and difficult to get a view of, then the course should be so made that the competitors come into view as often as possible. If we have all these matters attended to we are sure to have an enjoyable day's sport. But accidents are too prevalent in these meetings and, I think, many could be avoided if greater care were taken in the preparation of the course and in keeping back the crowds.

We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the most "sporting" meetings are those which most closely approximate to the hunt steeplechase, with good, clear, strong fences where the riders have plenty of room and each has a jump of a similar size at each obstacle to negotiate. Gaps, bullfinches and such inequalities should be eliminated as far as possible. The *honest* course is the popular one with the riders and the visible one to the spectators. The "sporting" course is the "fairest" course, and the fairest course is the one where fewest accidents occur and over which the most trouble has been taken. The more we think it over the more we feel convinced that the old-fashioned idea of natural courses is the one which produces the least sporting result.

There is one more point I must touch on before leaving the subject. It is so often said that running a horse in a point-to-point will make him intemperate in the hunting field. This is a mere hypothesis unsupported by experience. It rates the intelligence of the horse too low. What it comes to is this. The temperate horse is supposed to become intemperate in the hunting field in November because he has had a fast gallop in April. This is hardly reasonable when we think it over. Supposing a horse has had an unfortunate experience in one point-to-point, such as a bad fall, a gruelling finish, or unnecessary punishment, then he may very easily be intemperate when he sees the next race meeting. But a horse is intelligent enough to know the difference between hunting and racing. We used to have an old steeplechase horse in the stable some years ago. He was perfectly temperate out hunting, but when hounds ran across the racecourse he flatly refused even to cross it. He had had unhappy experiences there, and he knew perfectly well that hunting and racing were two different affairs.

A good gallop never does a horse any harm, but what leads to excitement is fear of pain. It is an association of ideas. The pain may be associated with the point-to-point, but as long as it does not refer to the hunting field there will be no sign of increased intemperance when with hounds. Let us give the horse credit for a little sense.

PLATE XXIII.

A CLEAN GALLOPING FENCE.

XVIII

CAN SADDLES BE IMPROVED?

I've lived my life, I've nearly done,
I've played the game all round;
But I'm free to confess that the best of my fun
I owe to horse and hound.

WE have grown up and lived with the saddle as we know it to-day, and we are so accustomed to its shape and appearance that criticism comes as rather a surprise. It is ridden in and seen so frequently that it is rare to hear discussion upon its merits or demerits. Almost every other point of riding, of horse mastery, of horse management, and of equipment is discussed daily, but the saddle is accepted as it is, without comment or controversy.

But is the hunting saddle, as we know it to-day in England, the best shape that can be devised? It has undoubtedly gone through many changes in the past century. We have had longer flaps, flaps cut forward and flaps cut straight; we have had knee rolls, padded seats, front arches cut back, leather and linen covered padding, safety bars, and so on; but the principle of the seat has remained much the same. Abroad, we have had a variety of different seats to study—the Mexican, the Arab, the Colonial, the Spanish, and some others. All these are very different in shape and appearance from the one we ride in this country to-day. Consequently, it is as well that we should realise that our present saddle is not necessarily perfect and that it is a subject which is well worth thinking over.

The correct balance of the rider in the saddle was discussed at some length in Chapter I. We must now look into the balance of the horse and see to what extent we can make the two coincide. If we can build a saddle which will co-ordinate the two, then we shall have made a definite step forward in the progress of equestrianism.

So let us first of all look at Fig. 21 and study the outline of an ordinary hunting saddle.

The line A—B represents the line of the stirrup leathers, when hanging naturally. C represents the position for the rider's seat into which it is practically forced. Consequently, as the feet are so much in advance of the seat, when at the standstill and the walk, the tendency is always for the seat to keep slipping (or being pushed by the pressure of the feet) still farther back. As the seat slips back it brings the feet farther forward, and the normal position for them is

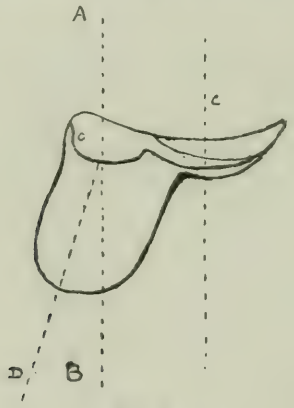


Fig. 21.

on the line D. With saddles so made, it is rare to see a stirrup leather kept in a vertical position for this very reason.

We all know of this tendency, and of the difficulty in counteracting it. It produces two distinct faults in equitation. Firstly, it puts the rider "behind his work." If the horse gives a sudden movement, any rider knows only too well the difficulties that are experienced. In such a position we are in no way prepared for the unexpected, or capable of counteracting it. Before we can do any good, we have to remove the seat from the saddle and throw the body forward. It is somewhat like the recruit standing on his heels on

parade. He cannot carry out the word of command until he has got into the true position of attention, with the weight of his body upon the fore part of his feet.

Secondly, it is the wrong position for a horse to carry weight. Many an early morning buck or "heave up" is caused by this. So-called "cold backs" and other sources of liveliness are often due to the fact that horses hate to feel pressure upon this part of their anatomy. Also, it is, as we all know, the most tiring place to carry weight. The infantryman knows well that unless he gets his pack well up on his shoulders, he will never complete even a short march without distress, and the same rule applies to all animals in their capacity for carrying a burden.

Side saddles are particularly bad in this respect, and every saddler will tell of the difficulties that have to be encountered and the positive discomfort which is often occasioned to the horse by having to carry so much weight on his loins. It is, therefore, no point of contention if it is asserted that it must be wrong to ask the horse to carry the rider's weight upon this portion of his back for any except momentary periods, and it suggests there must be something not quite scientifically correct in the build of the modern saddle. So let us closely examine this matter to see if it is not possible to overcome these difficulties to a certain extent.

It is the ideal of all horsemen to be "one" with their horses. When this is effected it means simply that the rider's balance is working in conjunction with the horse's balance. To put it in other words, it implies that the rider's line of equipoise passes vertically through the horse's centre of gravity.

Let us look at Fig. 22. A horse's centre of gravity is to be found within a spot varying within the circle shown. It is not a fixed point, it varies for several reasons. The way the head is carried is one important reason for variation. We have also considerations of dynamics, of angles of elevation and descent, and so on, which produce slight differences in the point of balance. But it is sufficient to say that, generally speaking, it will always be found somewhere within this circle. It must, therefore, be necessary for us to get our

own balance as near this point as is possible. This means that the rider's line of equipoise should pass vertically through the centre of this circle for the "neutral" position.

If we look at Fig. 23, the dotted line A—B represents the rider's balancing line. Now, before we proceed to place our rider upon the horse's back, let us see how he looks on the ground. A rider to be balanced must, of course, be balanced from his feet, even when in the saddle, and although there may be many an occasion in riding when he is not so balanced, those occasions should be as infrequent and as fleeting as possible. So let us turn to Fig. 24.

Fig. 22.

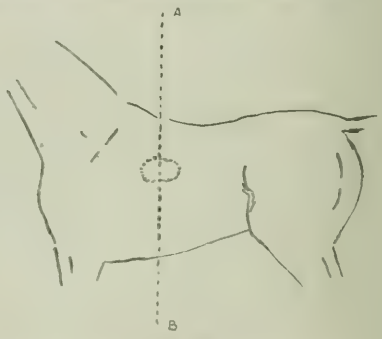


Fig. 23.

The line A—B represents his balancing line or line of equipoise. The line C—D shows the position relatively to the line of equipoise of his seat bones. These two lines are, it will be seen, comparatively close together. But if we look back at Fig. 21, we shall see that in the modern saddle the lines are very much farther apart, proportionately.

If the rider were to bend his knees a little more (as when shortening his stirrups), the seat bones would be pushed farther back. Generally speaking, 1 inch shorter in the leather drives the seat bones back 4 inches. But this does not affect the argument. It is merely a question of degree and not of principle.

This rider is balanced from his feet, which the rider in the saddle

of Fig. 21 would find it very difficult to be, and so he is in the first position of a horseman—balanced. Now, before we put our prospective horseman upon his mount we must look at the saddle we intend him to bestride.

Fig. 24.

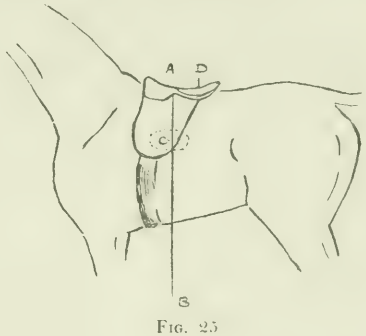


Fig. 25

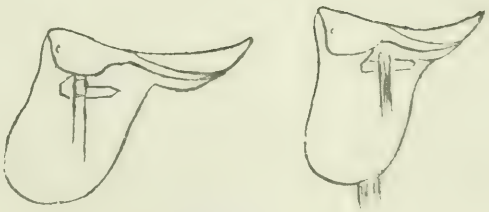


Fig. 26.

In Fig. 25 we see the saddle placed on the horse's back. It is a little farther forward than usual, and the pommel is a little higher in consequence. At first glance it may not appear to be particularly different from the ordinary saddle, and, of course, it is not intended that it should be. In detail, however, when we come to look we

shall find several points of novelty and divergence from the old pattern.

Here the line A—B represents the natural line of the stirrup leather passing through the horse's centre of gravity, marked C. D represents the position of the rider's seat bones. It should be noted that the saddle is more forward on the horse's back than in the usual saddle, and the rider's weight is clear of the loin. In order to attain this it has been necessary to put the girths a little farther back, but the side-bars remain in practically the same position.

Fig. 27.

Fig. 28.

The diagram (p. 99, Fig. 26) will show the differences fairly clearly. The flaps are cut farther back and extended rather more to the rear than before, and the tree has been considerably shortened. Now we will place our friend of Fig. 24 upon this saddle and see how he looks, so that in Fig. 27 we have the horse and rider really "one." Whatever the horse does the rider is ready to go with him. There is no being left behind here. The horse is carrying the rider on the right place on his back and can, therefore, do his work with less fatigue. As the rider is sitting farther forward on the horse's back, he will not have to ride so short as he did before.

He will be able to ride quite an inch longer, and that will give him greater freedom and less exertion. He will find he has greater control and will not always be slipping back.

If these simple principles can be accepted as sound, we must now follow the line of argument. If a principle is proved right for hacking or hunting, it must also be right for racing ; because it is a difference in degree alone. What is right for the one must also be right for the other—in principle. Many modern jockeys now go to the post as in Fig. 28. The knees are as high as the top of the horse's withers and, when sitting in the saddle at the stand or the walk, the

Fig. 29.

Fig. 30

whole weight of the jockey's body is on the loins. When he races he assumes a position as in Fig. 29. Here we should note how far the jockey is out of the saddle. His knees are so high up that he gets very slight control, and in the event of accident or the unexpected, disaster is the usual result. All these contortions are the result of the very correct and proper desire to be "over" their work when going at speed.

But let us look for a moment at the next two Figs., 30 and 31, and see if we cannot attain the same result by more efficacious methods. In Fig. 30 the jockey is much more forward on the horse's back than in Fig. 28 ; therefore, he can ride at much greater length.

We should note how far he is able to get his knee down the horse's side and the much greater control such a position produces.

In Fig. 31 we see him finishing the race, and it seems that he must have much more driving power than our friend in Fig. 29. A

Fig. 31.

line is drawn to show the vertical stirrup leather, without which we cannot hope to be truly balanced in the saddle. A saddle on these lines can easily be built by any saddler if he is given the foregoing details, and a trial will prove it well worth the experiment.

XIX

WHIP AND SPUR

Then squire, volleying oaths and vexed,
Fighting his hunter for refusing.

EVERYBODY who rides does well to have a whip, stick or crop in their hands, but it should seldom be used as a means of punishment. There are, certainly, occasions with lazy horses when a "touch up" is desirable. In fact, with horses of lethargic temperament it is necessary to wake them up at times. But these occasions are the exception, and the application of either whip or spur requires neither rules to guide nor experience to teach when riding such as these beyond the fact that, if a horse must be hit, he should be hit on the quarters, avoiding the ribs, the hips, or any bony part. Such horses are not worth riding, anyway; and the sooner we get hold of something more interesting the better.

Let us drop these exceptions and discuss normal horses. The whip is used most often when jumping, and particularly when the horse is refusing, and the following questions are often asked: When a horse won't jump, when should he be hit? Should we hit him while his nose is looking over the fence (or eating it!) and hold him there, or should we turn him round and hit him with his back to the fence? Or, again, should we wait until we have re-faced him, and hit him then? If so, when should he be hit? Directly he starts off, and continuing until he gets to the take-off, or wait until he actually should make the spring? Or, again, is it right to turn his head away at all? Is it not better to rein back until we get far enough away to shove him at it again with a good reminder added as interest?

Before directly answering these questions, let us survey the facts for a moment. It has been pointed out in other chapters that the right solution with refusers is either to lower the rail or to make the fence smaller or to jump a smaller fence. But when this cannot be done, we must get over the difficulty in some other way. The first rule to remember is that a horse refuses, probably, because he dis-

likes jumping, consequently we are hardly likely to increase his affection by hitting him. Our first idea should be to make him enjoy it, and punishment is hardly compatible with happy memories. All our training should have pleasant associations as its slogan.

You may reply, "It is, of course, often quite easy to train a young horse to jump on these lines; but what does really annoy us is the old horse which can jump and knows all about it, but won't jump. What is to be done then? Why shouldn't he have a jolly good belting? He well deserves it (and, I may say, he usually gets it)."

Well, now, before we decide that he deserves it, let us think why he is refusing.

The various reasons have been dealt with already in Chapter XIV. on "Mastery," and if we think things over on those lines we must come to the conclusion that the whip is no solution.

If he is too fresh, a pipe opener will put it right; if the fence is too big, a smaller one will overcome the difficulty, or a lead given by a friend may produce the desired result.

When a horse is jumping he wants all his attention on what he is doing, and we should do nothing to distract him or to get him to take his eyes off the obstacle. Consequently, hitting him while approaching a fence is quite the wrong moment. To hit him when his back is turned to it is merely silly. What we do want to do is to give him encouragement and to help him to make up his mind when he should take off. So that the only use of the whip should be to tap him on the shoulder on the side to which he is inclined to refuse just at the moment of take-off. It is not necessary to rein back refusers. They can well be turned round and re-put at the fence; but to hit them after they have actually refused is asking for trouble.

This method of tapping a horse on the shoulder applies equally when finishing a race. Enough has already been written about the many races that have been lost by the injudicious use of the whip, and it is unnecessary further to emphasise the point here. All we need say is that good jockeys know when a horse is doing his best, and the only way to get the final supreme effort out of him is to tap

PLATE XXIV.

SHARP SPURS DO NO GOOD.

him on the shoulder and, perhaps, speak to him; but if we hit him, we only stop him. Punishment under such circumstances is so utterly abhorrent to any sportsman that it is seldom seen nowadays in good racing circles. But, unfortunately, we still see many riders who are less experienced lose their heads and the race by very regrettable exhibitions. I think it would be a very good thing if the Jockey Club and the Stewards of the N.H.C. would issue a rule that no jockey should carry anything else than a standard pattern cane. This standard should be such that it would be strong enough for encouragement and correction only, and would break directly much force was used. I believe if this rule were brought in it would save owners many disappointments.

We often see steeplechase riders using sharp spurs, and this practice is very much to be deprecated. Not only is it wrong to use sharp spurs when jumping steeplechase fences, but it is wrong in the show ring and in the hunting field. Polo players have long recognised this fact. No one, however careful he may be, can be sure not to draw blood when jumping fences, and, when hunting, a fall may easily cause a nasty wound. The whole point about the sharp spur is that it is quite unnecessary at any pace faster than the walk. A horse when jumping a steeplechase fence probably does not feel the spur at the moment, any more than we should notice the sting of a bee when being pursued by a rhinoceros, and therefore its application is without effect. But after the race is over it is a frequent spectacle to see his sides pitted with spur marks—and all for no purpose! The sharp spur is very useful in training young horses in the riding school to answer to the leg, but that is all. Once that has been taught, the sharp spur should never more be used, and a blunt one should take its place. Let us, therefore, put away all our instruments of severity and ride our horses with fresh ideas: ideas of sympathy and understanding, and determination that both we and our horses shall be happy together. Let us remember the old, old rule: Make your horse comfortable and he will make you comfortable. And let us extend that a little farther. Let us realise that the horse will do anything we ask of him provided he understands.

XX

WHY DO HORSES SHY?

But I thought, "I'd give something to have his receipt,
A rum one to follow, a bad one to beat."

WE all know that some horses are badly addicted to this habit, and others are not. Most of us accept the fact as being purely temperamental and leave it at that. We know that some horses are very much more nervous than others, and we suppose that it is due to this alone that some horses "behave like perfect idiots." This supposition passes muster as long as we do not think about it, but to those of us who are not content with shallow solutions, it does not seem to be even an explanation, far less a proof. It does not even state facts.

We all know of nervous, highly sensitive horses who do not shy at all, and we also have often had real trouble with a commoner who does not appear to have any nerves whatever until he meets a steam-roller. We know of very nearly as many old horses who shy as we do of young ones. We know of lots of young ones who do not shy at all. So when we come to think it out we find there must be some other reason than mere sensitiveness. Before we go further there are two reasons we will get out of the way at once, and they are "eyesight" and "freshness."

It is often said that a horse with defective eyesight shies. This may or may not be the case. Personally, I do not think there is much in it. But if it is the real reason, then I suppose it would be incurable (unless we introduced spectacles!), and there is nothing more to be said.

The second one, due to freshness, is not shying really. It is a little sort of a joke, or game, on the part of the horse. I admit it often becomes quite serious if the rider is nervous and inefficient, but if it is treated as only play, it is soon over, and is of little or no importance. It is, however, the real systematic shying that we

want to discuss and to understand. It is so tedious, so difficult to cure, and requires sometimes more than all our patience, but the reason for it all is merely a matter of upbringing.

It is well known that with Irish horses the habit is more prevalent than with English ones, for the simple reason that Irish horses, when youngsters, have seen less of the novelties of modern civilisation than those bred on this side.

The horse that has been brought up in a paddock beside a railway line does not shy at trains, and horses that have been accustomed all their lives to strange sights shy at nothing. So the first thing is to see that our young stock "mix in society" as much as possible. They should see motors and hay carts, and trains, and bicycles, and wheelbarrows, and steam-lorries, from their earliest youth. If that can be done, then they will not shy at these things, or indeed any other things, when they are taken up and ridden later on. But, of course, it is not always possible to have paddocks so situated. It often must be that the field in which they spend their early days is far away from noise, and roads, and rollers. In such circumstances some difficulty will probably be experienced when they are first taken up and find themselves amidst new surroundings.

But the difficulty will soon fade, provided we put them into loose-boxes which look out into the stable yard. Here they will stand all day long if we will let them, with their heads out, looking at all the things that are to be seen, with evident enjoyment and interest. Horses treated like this do not shy. But what usually happens? They are tied up in either a stall facing a blank wall or else in boxes from which they can see nothing. In such circumstances is it to be wondered at that they are frightened at the many strange sights to be seen when out of doors?

Although we are a nation of horse owners and have prided ourselves on our knowledge of horse management, we are only beginning to understand how horses ought really to be treated. We should look upon them as highly intelligent creatures, whose intellect wants stirring, and not as hay forks to be locked away in the dark after their work is done. We find in other countries this ques-

tion of shying hardly exists, and there is no reason why it should with us. Hitherto we have tackled the problem in the wrong way. This is particularly noticeable in connection with blinkers in harness. The only two reasons I have ever heard for their use are, first, that breaking in a young horse to harness, the sight of the wheels pursuing him causes fright; and second, that he would always be watching the whip hand of the driver and would be jumping away from every movement were it not for the blinkers. If these are the only reasons, and I have never heard any others, they are very weak ones.

Training the horse to the sight of the wheels is so simple a matter that it is hardly worth bothering about. We see horses everywhere in other countries being driven without blinkers and no difficulty is experienced. So that it is simply impossible to support the contention that there is any danger or difficulty in it.

The other argument that the horse jumps to the movement of the driver's arm only shows that the coachman does not know how to use the whip. When the whip is used properly it is an encouragement, and when so used would cause no alarm on the horse's part. A most common occurrence is, when a horse has shied at something, for the driver to punish him with the whip, instead of giving him encouragement by stroking him with it and speaking to him in a soothing way. So such a contention is a complete "give away," and proclaims bad management and bad coachmanship.

Unfortunately the prevalence of blinkers seems to be increasing. Not only are ordinary blinkers practically always used (and they very often fit very badly), but blind blinkers are coming in, especially in the streets of London. This is a custom that we all ought to do all in our power to stop; although it cannot be described as physical cruelty, it is probably one of considerable mental suffering.

Let us put ourselves into the place of the horse for a moment. He is very likely stalled in a dark stall, facing a blank wall whenever he is not at work. When he comes out the light is very likely too strong for him, and he shies at some passing object. Whereupon the blinkers are made blind blinkers, and for evermore he is forced to draw his load through the streets seeing nothing whatever. Surely all

horse lovers should raise their voices against this absurd practice. Let a horse see all he can and he will give up shying, but to commit him to perpetual darkness is surely the incorrect way of tackling the problem.

The horse is so entirely sensible if we will only allow him to know what he is doing and what is expected of him, that it is such a pity we do not treat him, like all those who understand and who are fond of animals, with *sympathy* and intelligence.

Those who travel cannot help noticing these things, but those who "only England know" are very liable to allow custom to blunt their critical faculties, and to be content to leave things as they are.

From the æsthetic point of view the blinker is, of course, a most hideous thing. It is only custom which makes it tolerable. It would be an excellent thing if they were, by mutual agreement, totally abolished. There is only one place for them, and that is in museums.

The way to handle a horse when he shies is an important one, because we so often see the problem tackled the wrong way.

What often happens is this. The horse sees something, begins to prick his ears at it and to turn his quarters away, whereupon the rider gives him a really good whack, jams the spurs into him, and forces him past the object.

This is the regular roughrider's trick, who thereby gets a spurious reputation for being a "strong" rider.

In effect, what has happened is this. The horse is suspicious of something he sees, and that has a local association with him.

He really wants to have a good look at it and to reassure himself. While this is going on in his mind he suddenly feels the pain of the blow from the stick. The consequence is, that he now associates the spot not only with the suspicious object, but with punishment. The habit, far from being cured, is merely being perpetuated.

The right way to deal with the problem is, firstly, to speak to him in a friendly and not a boisterous way. The next thing is to apply a very strong pressure of the far side leg and rein so as to

endeavour to keep the horse straight in the direction he should be going.

We often see the reverse. We see the rider pulling the horse's head in towards the object, so that he is quickly moving sideways like a crab, which in these days of motors and slippery roads is highly dangerous.

It is in circumstances such as these that the horse wants encouragement, not punishment, and the friendly guiding pressure of the man's legs against his sides to reassure him, and to help him "his nerves and finer fibres brace."

XXI

HORSE SHOWS

With a head like a snake, and a skin like a mouse,
An eye like a woman, bright, gentle, and brown,
With loins and back that would carry a house,
And quarters to lift him smack over a town.

"*CANST thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?*

"*The glory of his nostrils is terrible.*

"*He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength.*

"*He goeth on to meet the armed men.*

"*He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted.*

"*Neither turneth he back from the sword.*

"*The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.*

"*He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.*

"*He saith among the trumpets, Ha, Ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.*"

We have all been brought up from our youth with this telling passage from Job constantly recurring to our memories, and yet it doesn't seem to give us ideas.

He was of course referring to war, but the character of the horse is the same, whether he is facing the "glittering spear and the shield," or the bands and garlands and parasols of the horse show arena.

So that when people say that you can't expect a horse to jump well with all those d——d bands and flowers about, just refer them to the above passage, and say that if they don't understand the psychology of the horse, you have very good authority from an old gentleman who, though he lived many hundreds of years ago, did know what he was talking about.

Horses do not mind these things, unless they are associated with

punishment. The well-treated horse will go anywhere and jump anything, through hoops on fire, or smoke screens, or any other thing we care to ask him. Personally, I think they know there is something a little extra demanded of them, and they will give you a good round if only you ride them well.

The next point show-ring riders have to face is the cry of "trick jumping."

Of all criticisms this is, perhaps, the hardest to bear, because it is so very prejudiced, and has no relation whatever to the real facts.

What the genuine show-ring competitor wishes to display is nothing more or less than the high standard that can be attained by a well-trained horse, and an accomplished rider in the art of crossing a country.

Of course, now and then we do come across competitors who are not out for any display of horsemanship, but who are merely "pot hunters." They are often riding an oldish horse, too unsound to sell. They have learnt some method of getting the course without fault, and manage to earn the "summer keep" between them, which is all that is required.

But surely we mustn't all be branded as trick riders because of these!

With the genuine competitor there should be no difference, whether in the ring or out hunting. The art of the leap is the same in both cases.

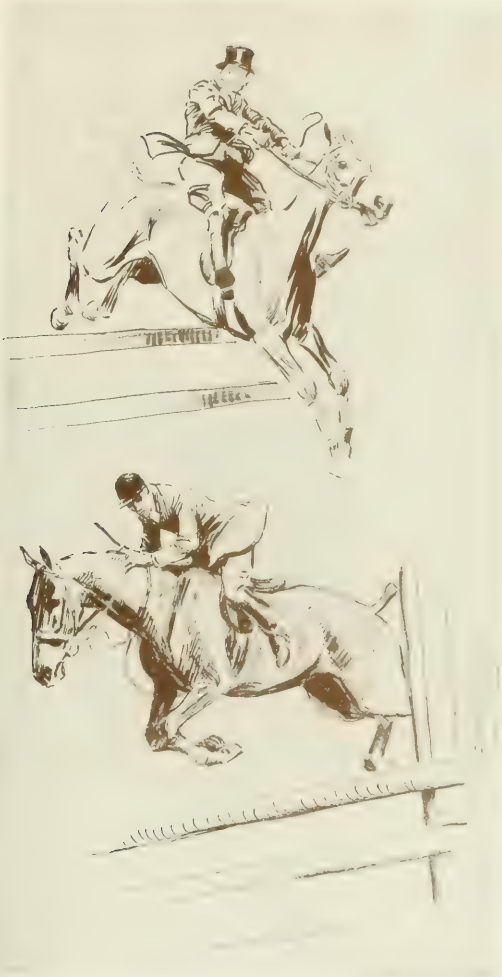
It consists of "control," "momentum," "the take-off," "contact," "the land," "the collection," and "the continuation."

As all these points have been discussed at length in other chapters it is superfluous to go into them here.

But the rider is only exemplifying before an audience all the points which are essential in crossing a natural country—points which all hunting men would do well to study and to emulate.

If only it were possible to get the great hunting public to realise the lessons which are there to be learnt, we should have gone a very long way in improving the standard of riding in the hunting field.

PLATE XXV.



THE AMATEUR:
TOO FAR BACK.

THE PROFESSIONAL:
TOO FAR FORWARD.

The competitors are, in fact, the exponents and not the eccentrics of equestrianism.

But the art is difficult, and we none of us feel we shall ever really attain even approximate perfection.

It is, perhaps, not generally understood how the question of the height of the fences affects the difficulty of the course.

The essence of success is in the "take-off," and if we can get that right we have surmounted most of our difficulties.

Now if the fence is a very low one, a horse has a much larger area in which to effect this, but the higher we raise the fence the smaller this area becomes, as the following diagrams show:

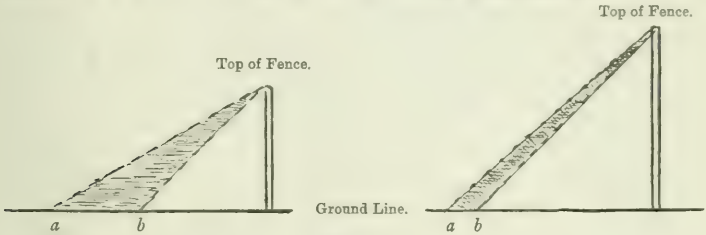


FIG. 32.

In each case *a* is about the extreme capacity for a horse to jump his fence without touching it with his hind legs, and *b* is the limit for not touching with his fore feet. Consequently, it can easily be seen how much more latitude there is when jumping the small fence as compared with the larger one.

There are many schools who, finding the art of the approach difficult, have decided to give it up altogether and gallop at their fences leaving the question of the take-off entirely to their horses. This is not horsemanship, and it is not wise. Under such conditions the horse may clear five or six obstacles without a fault, but the end is in sight. It is bound to come, and before the course is completed, one fence, at least, has been laid low.

At Olympia, where we can study and observe all the various kinds of riding, this point is very obvious. The most successful

competitors were those who had most studied the art of the approach and the take-off.

The next most important point is that of free loins. This enables the horse to execute a true parabola with his hind legs. But if the rider's weight is ever so little back, this parabola is depressed, so that the hind feet are liable to touch the rail.

This, of course, causes a fault in the show-ring, but when crossing a natural country it has an equal if somewhat different importance.

A horse's hind feet should land the same distance apart from his forelegs as they were when he took off.

If, however, the rider leans back, he causes the hind feet to reach the ground a little further behind than they ordinarily should be. When this occurs it means that the horse has not the fullest amount of propulsion on landing that he would have naturally.

So for the racing man it means loss in speed, and for the hunting man rather more of a scramble on landing than he should have.

These are points which the show-ring can teach, and which should be of assistance to us all.

Marking in the ring still seems to leave a good deal to be desired. There are several points which should be carefully explained to both competitors and judges before any contest begins, so as to save argument or disappointment afterwards.

The points are these:

1. It should be quite clear whether faults are cumulative or not.

For instance, if a horse touches the rail with his forefeet and knocks it down with his hind ones, what is the total "faultage"?

2. At the triple bars a horse knocks down the lowest rail, but otherwise clears the fence. How does he compare with a horse that scatters the whole "caboodle"?

3. Is a horse that only *just* knocks down the fence with his fore shoe to be penalised equally with the horse that breasts the fence?

In this matter I speak feelingly. I consider that "danger" should be the underlying principle. I think that a horse that breasts a fence should be disqualified at once, as such a habit is a

PLATE XXVI.

"CONTACT" GOOD.

A GOOD SEAT, BUT "CONTACT" LOST.

positive crime in the hunting field. A horse that knocks a fence down with his knees should be doubly penalised against the one who only knocks it with his foot.

4. "*Running Out*," or "*Refusing*."—The difference between these two should be postulated in such a way that no one could make a mistake in marking. For example, there is an old trick that when you feel your horse is going to refuse you pull him out and turn it into a "run out."

5. Should the horse that goes round with a straight run be marked similarly with the one who is always being stopped and turned round?

6. *Rider Falls.*—Should this count as if the horse had made a bad mistake? It sometimes happens that, owing to some unforeseen circumstance, the rider does part company from his horse on the flat. It seems it would be better to take such an incident as merely a "time" delay rather than penalise for a jump that has never taken place.

7. *Refusals.*—A ruling should be made in regard to this point.

A horse stops in front of a fence but knocks it down with his nose or chest and walks over it. Does this count as a refusal?

In some rings two refusals are allowed at each fence. In others, only one. Sometimes it is only two refusals all round.

This should be carefully thought out beforehand. Personally, I think that two or three refusals only should be permitted throughout the whole course. This would stop a lot of painful performances where the rider is determined to complete the course in total disregard of the feelings of the onlookers.

In country shows, the water jump is usually regarded as an essential. It is in front of the grand-stands, because it is spectacular and is frequently looked upon as the most important fence of all.

This is a pity, because it is, firstly, a quite unnatural fence; secondly, it is sometimes difficult to fill; thirdly, it is hard to keep the ground from poaching, which makes it very unpleasant for both horse and rider, and is an occasional cause of overreaches; fourthly,

it requires neither skill nor horsemanship to negotiate—it is just a wild "hurroosh," and the lucky ones get over; fifthly, it is such a bad lesson for our horses. We should have been trying to get them to jump temperately always, and then we find this unnatural fence which upsets our training and excites them.

It is quite reasonable to want a spectacular fence in front of the stands, and I suggest that a "double oxer" meets all those requirements to a greater extent than any water jump could ever do.

When we have entered for any jumping competition we naturally want to make as good a round as possible, and yet we often find we have made a particularly bad one. This is an experience we all have to face some time or other, but if we bear the following tips in mind, we shall find that bad rounds become much fewer, and good ones more frequent.

The first great rule is to see that your horse is well exercised beforehand. For a good bold horse three hours is by no means too much, but no matter what the temperament of your horse may be, you may be sure that any error there may be will be on the side of under- and not over-exercise.

The second rule is, throughout your training, jump much and jump daily, but don't jump big stuff. Four feet is quite high enough, and leave the big fences for the competition. If your horse has got to like jumping he won't mind the extra few inches in the arena, but he will soon sicken of jumping if he is continually put at big fences.

The next rule is to watch his feet and legs. No horse, however brilliant, will jump well if he is sore, and it is far better to forgo a few days' schooling and keep his legs fine and cool than to run the risk of any inflammation, however slight, on the day of the competition.

Ride with reins shortened, so that there is no slack to get in your way, and carefully avoid sharp spurs. Pull your stirrups up an extra hole, and leave the rest to yourself, your horse, and fate.

These are, I think, the best "tips" for competitors in the show-ring.

XXII

INSTRUCTION

IT is not so many years ago that the riding school in the Army was dreaded by recruits, and not without some justification.

The rough-riding sergeant would stand in the centre of the school with a long whip. His tongue was never silent, the whip was seldom still.

The recruits had to trot round and round the school for long periods without stirrups, without saddles, or without reins, and when they fell off, as they often did, it was an occasion for ridicule or abuse. The recruits suffered from chafes and boils and sprains, and, of course, stiffness. Absentees were so numerous that nine months was considered quick to get dismissal, and the course often spread to double that time.

Needless to say, this was the very antithesis of good teaching, and it is a matter of congratulation that this method is now a thing of the past.

We do not want to make pupils either frightened or nervous. We do not want to show them how difficult horsemanship is, but how easy.

We do not want to ask them to do things we hate to do ourselves, but to do those exercises which are simple and easily accomplished.

The essence of good instruction is to instil confidence. We cannot get that unless we demand easy tasks at first.

We must remember that a pupil's muscles are undeveloped, and the whole position is strange.

Confidence can only be attained by slow degrees.

In every other branch of study a start is made with easy lessons, and it has always been a mystery why riding should be the exception.

We, as experienced riders, all know how uncomfortable it is to ride without stirrups.

How we hate to ride on a numnah, and how difficult we find it if we drop the reins and cross our arms. And yet many instructors have no qualms about asking their pupils to do these particularly unpleasant exercises.

The reasons that are given are three.

The first is that it is essential to develop the riding muscles.

To this the answer is : Yes. We want to work up those muscles, but the result can be better attained by teaching the pupil simple exercises at a walk, such as the half-passage, right shoulder in, etc., which develop the riding muscles splendidly, without the discomfort and the falls the other method necessitates.

The second is that by this means the pupil is got "down in his saddle."

The meaning of this statement is rather obscure, but what gets a rider to look well in his saddle quickest is the growth of the confidence which inspires the requisite freedom and suppleness.

The third is, that it teaches a pupil to be independent of the reins, and so saves jabbing a horse in the mouth when jumping.

The reply to this is very simple. The reason why a pupil jabs a horse when jumping is because he is off his balance.

If the instructor would only consider the importance of this more and work at it, he would find the question of pulling at the horse with the reins would automatically cease. So let us reconsider this form of teaching, and see if we cannot obtain better results in a much simpler and pleasanter way.

It is not given to all of us to be in a position of getting hold of a wooden horse. But those who cannot, can, at least, find a very quiet cob, which will do almost as well.

The first three lessons, at least, should be upon this form of mount. There is a great deal to teach, and the time will be fully occupied.

For example : Mounting, dismounting ; how to hold the reins ; the correct position in the saddle ; the length of the stirrup ; how to alter the length of the stirrup leather from the saddle ; how to tighten the girths ; to know how saddling should fit ; the names and

parts of both horse and saddlery; how to handle a horse in the stable; how to bring a horse to the door, and so on.

These points will take at least three lessons before the pupil is ready to be seen on a real horse at all.

During all this, it must be remembered, the pupil is gaining confidence.

We must realize that the very fact of being astride a horse at all is a novel experience, and that, also, even the act of sitting in a saddle is using muscles that have never been used before.

In the early stages we cannot be too careful or too thoughtful.

After the wooden horse stage is over, the pupil can then be allowed to get on to a live horse, and to perform exercises at a walk.

Here again a whole series of exercises should be practised. Trotting should not be contemplated.

After the pupil's seat and hands have been checked and corrected, the muscles of the legs should be worked up by attempting the various turns. By trying the turn on the hocks, the centre and the forehand; by riding to a point, by making square turns at the corners of the manège, or school; by reining back; by mounting and dismounting; by learning neck-reining, half-passage, and so on.

In this way we can bring the pupil on very well indeed. Confidence and muscle is increasing daily. Chafes, sprains, and stiffness are unknown.

After these things have been done for some few lessons the trot can be practised. If we take the same care over the turns at this pace, and work up the pupil's muscles by simple exercises, such as the half-passage (if the horse understands these things), we shall be laying good foundations for the future.

The next stage is the canter. Here there is so much to teach; it becomes a question of the ability of the pupil, the capacity of the horse, and the circumstances under which the instruction is being conducted, that no hard or fast rules can be suggested.

Neither is it the intention in this chapter to go into details, but only to outline the general principles upon which good instruction can be framed.

After the pupil can canter his horse collectedly, attempt should be made to teach jumping.

Directly the pupil is able to obtain control at this pace, the sooner the leap is started the better.

Some instructors say that unless a horse has something to jump it is impossible to get any results, and, in consequence, the unhappy tyro sees ominous bars and other unpleasant looking tackle brought into the school. All this is somewhat alarming, and it is unnecessary.

There is a very great deal to teach when the bar is only lying on the ground. The method of approach, the position of the body, and particularly the hands during the imaginary leap, the collection after the passage of the obstacle, and so on, all demand much demonstration and practice before the pupil is ready to jump the rail only one foot from the ground.

But by teaching riding in this way we achieve two great points: we get the fundamentals right, and we never strain the pupil's confidence.

The result is extremely successful.

We find that riding can be taught more efficiently in about half the time, or even less, than in the old systems.

Not only that, but it is simplicity itself. We need waste no time on any fancy work; no patent straps are required, no tedious exercises, no expensive appliances, just simply—simplicity.

I therefore commend these principles to those who have pupils under their charge for their careful consideration.

I only ask them to ask themselves:

Do I like to trot round a riding-school without stirrups or reins? When did I do so last?

If I can ride reasonably well without these exercises, is it not logical to suppose my pupils can be taught to do so too?

I also ask them to remember that an ounce of confidence is worth a pound of falls.

Falling is all very well when we are fairly expert, but when "in statu pupilari"—no.

XXIII

TECHNOLOGY

And where are the pleasures I followed,
The chase in its sylvan abode,
The hounds that I hunted and holloaed,
The horses I stabled and rode?

A KNOWLEDGE of sporting terms is very essential to all sportsmen, but they are not always easy to come by. We often hesitate to show our ignorance, and few books (if any) help us in all branches of horse vocabulary. Here and there we pick up words, but where can we find them all together?

So in this chapter we are going to try to bridge this difficulty. We cannot actually create a sporting dictionary, or a guide to knowledge, but we can pick out some of the most technical expressions, with a view of helping those who are not very experienced, and of amusing those who are.

We will, therefore, start with the simple description of a horse. These are the chief colours. There are others, too, as owners of country-breds in India know, and rare ones like "mouse" are occasionally cropping up, but these will do for all ordinary purposes:

Bay.
Brown.
Black
Chestnut
- Liver.
- Bright.
- Washy.

Grey
- Fleabitten.
- Dappled.
- Iron.

Piebald.
Skewbald.
Sorrel.
Dun.
Roan
- Red.
- Blue.
- Strawberry.

White.
Cream.

When you aren't sure what the colour is, look at the muzzle. That is always accepted as the standard, because the hair is

always the same on that spot. On other parts of the body the colour is always changing. For instance, a brown horse will look quite black when he has his winter coat.

Now, next come the descriptive marks. They are:

Star.	Race.	Blaze.
Snip.	Stockings.	Socks.
	Wall eye.	Lop ears.

Markings.—Saddle, collar, trace, etc. (so-called because rubs always leave permanent white hairs).

Then how about the parts of the body?

We needn't put down the simple ones like head, neck, etc., but only those which are not the same as a man's body.

They are:

Canon-bone.	Croup.
Fetlock.	Wither.
Pastern.	Tush.
Hoof { Coronet.	Forelock.
Hoof { Wall.	Poll.
Hoof { Frog.	Rump.
Hoof { Sole.	Croup.
Gaskin.	Buttocks.
Mane.	Quarters.
Tail.	Cheshunts (or chestnuts).

Then there are all sorts of expressions over and above these which are in daily use.

Here are a few, but there are lots more:

Off side.	Near side.
Standing over.	On the leg.
Herring gutted.	Tied in below the knee.
Flat sided.	Short of bone.
Goose rumped.	Hairy heeled.
Fiddle headed	A commoner.

Roach backed.
Cow hocked.
Sickle hocked.
Ewe necked.
Calf kneed.
Grunts under the Stick.
Dishing.
Peacocky.
Brushing.
Good mover.
Tied in action.
A good doer.
Split up.
Long tailed horses.
Cock tailed.
Roman nosed.
High blower.
Feather.
Star gazing.
A nutcracker.
A refuser.
Nappy.
Yawing.
Good frontispiece.
Good rein.
Lots in front of you.
Straight shouldered.
Nothing in front.
A cold back.
Bridling.
Short of a rib.
Tucked up.
Parrot jawed.
Well ribbed up.

Then we come to the stable. Do you know all these?

STABLE.

Grooming:

Body Brush.
Dandy brush.
Water brush.
Scraper.
Curry comb.
Rubber.
Hoof pick.
Wisp.
Drenching horn.
Sieve.
Singeing lamp.

Clothing:

Day rug.
Night rug.
Pad.
Roller.
Quarter sheets.
Summer rugs.
Fly nets.
Fringe.
Hood.
Bandages.
Tail cover.
Boots.
Knee caps.

Stable:

Loose-box.	Pillar chains.	Manger.
Stall.	Rack.	Short rack.

Forage:

Meadow hay.	Bran.	Oaten straw.
Seeds hay.	Linseed.	Peat moss.
Oats.	Wheat straw.	Sawdust.

Habits:

Crib biting.	Wind sucking.	Weaving.

SADDLERY.

Bridle:

Brow band.	Cheek pieces.	Lip strap.
Nose band.	Throat lash.	

Bit:

Port { high. / low.	Checks.	Snaffle.
	Bit or curb.	Curb chain.
	Hooks.	

Martingale:

Running.	Irish.	Stops.
Standing.	Neck strap.	Rings.

Saddle:

Tree.	Flap.	Dees.
Pommel.	Sweat flap.	Spring bars and safety catch.
Cantle.	Girth straps.	
Surcingle.	Numnah.	

Or shoeing. Do you know all these?

Fullering.	Clinches.	Seated shoe.
Calking.	Roughing.	Frost cogs.
Racing plates.	Concave shoe.	Feather edged shoe.

Perhaps you have found those quite easy ; how about harness ?

Collar.
Hames and hame strap.
Traces.
Check strap.
Belly band.
Coupling reins.
Back band.
Crupper.
Breeching.
Terrets.
Kidney link.
Pole chains.
Bearing rein.
Tugs.
Blinkers.
Kicking strap.
Drops.

Or the parts of your clothing and equipment ?

Boots { top. / jack. / butcher. / riding. / loops. / garters. / stops. / jockeys. / boot hooks.

Crop { thong. / lash. / keeper. / gate stop. / hook. / jagging. / the stock.

Spurs { boot jack. / boss. / neck. / rowels. / stud and buckle. / loop end. / shaped, straight } sides.

The horn { ferule. / mouthpiece. / bell.

Sandwich case.
Canteen.
Holster flask.
Hat guard.
Woollies (for wet weather).

If you know all those, as you probably do, how about the common ailments of a horse ?

Lamenitis.
Navicular.
Ringbone (upper and lower).
Sand colic.
Round joints.
Broken wind.

Side bones.	Whistler.
Thrush.	Roarer.
Seedy toe.	Grunting.
Sand crack.	Warts.
Thoroughpins.	Warbles.
Bog spavin.	Botts.
Spavin.	Suspensory ligament.
Curbs.	Check ligament.
Fistula.	Bowed sinew.
Pink eye.	Corns.
Glanders.	Capped elbow (or hock).
Farcy.	Quittor.
Anthrax.	Canker.
Sesamoiditis.	Overreach.
Splints.	Cracked heels.
Split pastern.	Brushing.
Colic.	Stringhalt.
Windgalls.	Speedy cut.

I feel sure I haven't found one you don't know yet, so do you know all the common expressions in the hunting field ?

HUNTING FIELD.

The Fox:

Mask.	A vixen.	A leash of foxes.
Brush.	A dog fox.	Cubs.
Pads.	A brace of foxes.	An earth.

The Hound:

A couple of hounds.	Running mute.
The dog pack.	Riot.
Mixed pack.	Feathering.
Bitch pack.	Carrying a good head.
Running heel.	

Huntsman's Vernacular:

Yoicks.
Wind him.
Tally ho!
View halloa.
Loo in.
Hark to—venger, etc.
Yoi over.
'Ware riot.
Hark forrard away.
Owning a scent.
Running mute.
Carrying a good head.

The Hunt:

A check.
Casting.
Lifting hounds.
A throw-up.
Breast-high scent.
Run to ground.
To change foxes.
The kill or the death
To chop a fox.
A sinking fox.
To blow out of cover.

The Country:

A bullfinch.
A stake and bound.
Post and rails.
A double.
An in and out.
A drop fence.
A ditch to (or from) you.
A ride.
A headland.
Ridge and furrow.
'Ware seeds, roots, wire, etc.
A wattle.
A bottom

Miscellaneous:

Second horsemen.
Capping.
A runner.
A whipper-in { first. / second.
Blooding.
Earth stopping.
Field master.
The huntsman.
To walk a puppy.

Stag-hunting:

A yeld.
A warrantable deer.
All his rights.
Brow.

A runnable stag.	Bay.
Single.	Tray.
Slot.	Soiling pit.
Take soil.	Break soil.
Velvet.	Tufters.
Harbourer.	To rouse a stag.
To blanch.	To break bay.
Belling and rutting.	To cage.

Harriers:

Scut.	Leveret.	Puss.
Form.	Pads.	Jack-hare.

Now, should there be any words amongst this brief list that you don't know, never be afraid to ask. All good sportsmen are delighted to give their best information to anyone who is anxious to learn, but the one way to remain in ignorance always is to affect a knowledge which is not possessed, and to suffer from that little failing *mauvaise honte*

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